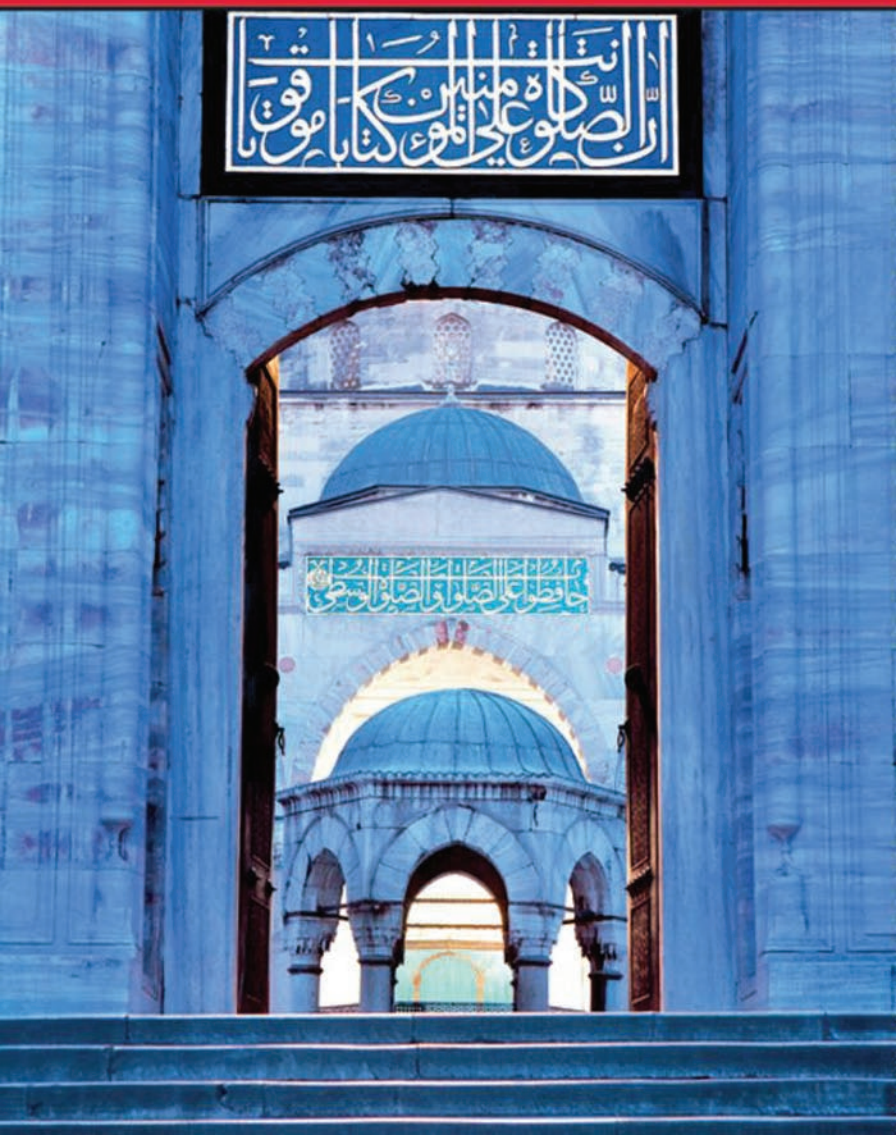
Frommer's

Istanbul



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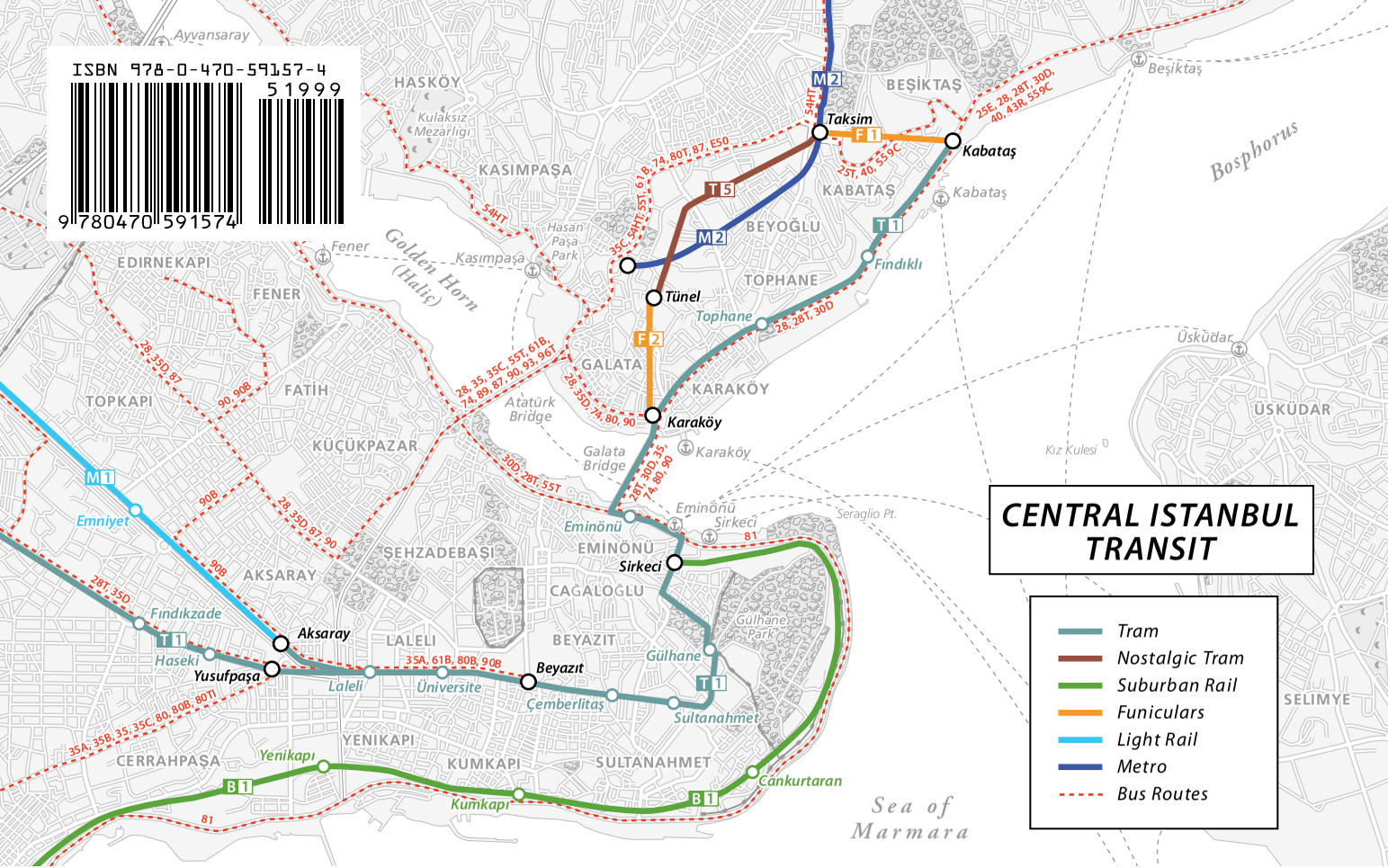

Frommer's®

Istanbul

2nd Edition

by Lynn A. Levine

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lynn A. Levine is author of *Frommer's Turkey* and has contributed to a number of other titles, including *Frommer's Italy from $90 a Day* and *Frommer's Southeast Asia.* When not writing about travel, Lynn is a communications consultant for organizations including UNICEF, the United Nations Development Program, and the International Fund for Animal Welfare, specializing in the development of campaign and cutting-edge strategic communications to create social change. She maintains the travel website www.talkingturkey.com as well as the portal www.wordandeed.com.

Published by:

WILEY PUBLISHING, INC.

111 River St.
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

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ISBN 978-0-470-59157-4 (paper); ISBN 978-0-470-87540-7 (ebk); ISBN 978-0-470-39590-5 (ebk)

Editor: Melinda Quintero with Jamie Ehrlich
Production Editor: Jana M. Stefanciosa
Cartographer: Andrew Murphy
Photo Editor: Richard Fox
Production by Wiley Indianapolis Composition Services
Front cover photo: Doorway at the Blue Mosque. ©Jean-Pierre Lescourret/Corbis
Back cover photo: Turkish magnet souvenirs. ©Jeremy Horner/Corbis

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Manufactured in the United States of America

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CONTENTS

LIST OF MAPS vi

1 BEST OF ISTANBUL 1

1 The Most Unforgettable Travel Experiences 2
2 The Best Museums, Mosques & Churches 6
3 The Best Things to Do for Free (or Almost)....7
4 The Best One-of-a-Kind Places to Stay....7
Best Views 8
5 The Best Food Experiences....8
The Best Turkey Websites 10
6 The Best Stuff to Bring Home....10

2 ISTANBUL IN DEPTH 12

1 Istanbul Today 12
2 History 101....13
Dateline....13
3 Etiquette & Customs 22
4 Architecture, Art & Music....23
5 An Overview of Islam 26
6 Turkish Cuisine....28
7 Recommended Reading 30
Midnight Express: Fact or Fiction? ...31

3 PLANNING YOUR TRIP TO ISTANBUL 32

1 When to Go....33
Istanbul Calendar of Events....34
Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan ...35
2 Entry Requirements....37
3 Getting There & Getting Around....38
Don't Let Taxi Drivers Take You for a Ride....42
Transport Made Easy with a Transit Pass 43
4 Money & Costs....46
What Things Cost in Istanbul 47
5 Health 48
6 Safety....49
7 Specialized Travel Resources 50
Important Tips for Single Women Travelers....51
Culinary Travel....52
8 Sustainable Tourism....52
9 Staying Connected....53
10 Tips on Accommodations....54

4 SUGGESTED ISTANBUL ITINERARIES 57

1 City Layout.....57
Istanbul's Neighborhoods in Brief ...57
2 The Best of Istanbul in 1 Day 63
3 The Best of Istanbul in 2 Days.....67
4 The Best of Istanbul in 3 Days 69

5 WHERE TO STAY 70

1 Best Hotel Bets.....70
2 Choosing a Neighborhood.....71
3 The Historic Peninsula.....72
4 Beyoğlu.....81
A Mystery Worthy of Agatha Christie Herself 88
5 Along the Bosphorus.....90
6 The Asian Side 92
7 Near the Airport 93

6 WHERE TO DINE 95

1 Best Dining Bets 95
A Restaurant Primer.....96
2 Restaurants by Cuisine 98
3 The Historic Peninsula..... 100
Eating Your Way through the Streets of Istanbul 108
4 Beyoğlu..... 109
5 The Asian Side 120

7 EXPLORING ISTANBUL 121

1 Sights & Attractions by Neighborhood..... 121
2 The Top Sights 124
The Imperial Ottoman Mosque ... 132
3 Byzantine Sights (or Byzantium Wasn't Built in a Day)..... 146
700 Years of Turkish Jews 148
Sultanahmet's Streets Paved with Gold: The Great Palace 149
4 Historic Hamams (Turkish Baths)..... 152
Steam Heat: Taking the Hamam .. 154
5 Ottoman Mosques, Tombs & Monuments 154
6 Palaces of the Sultans..... 160
Swift Boated Through the Symplegades 163
7 One If by Land; Two If by Sea: Constantinople's Defensive Walls 164
8 Istanbul's Contemporary Art Scene..... 167
9 Eminönü..... 169
Workshops in Ottoman Arts 170
10 Beyoğlu..... 178
Cruising Like a Sultan 183
11 The Asian Side 185
12 Special-Interest Sights..... 188
Salve for the Turkish Soul: Istanbul's Spas..... 188

8 ISTANBUL STROLLS 191

Walking Tour 1: Galata 191
Walking Tour 2: Istanbul Underground 197
Walking Tour 3: From the Land Walls to Balat & Fener 201

9 SHOPPING 209

1 The Shopping Scene 209
Caveat Emptor! Carpet-Buying Tips 212
2 Shopping A to Z 213
Deconstructing the Turkish Carpet 216
Your VAT Refund 223

10 ISTANBUL AFTER DARK 225

1 Taking in Turkish Nightlife 225
The Rhythm of the Night 226
2 The Performing Arts 228
3 The Local Bar Scene 232

11 SIDE TRIPS FROM ISTANBUL 237

1 Bursa: Gateway to an Empire 237
They Died with a Smile (or, That Joke's a Killer) 244
Water, Water Everywhere: Turkey's Mineral Springs 246
2 Iznik & Nicaea: A Pilgrimage & Some Plates 248
3 The Princes' Islands 249
4 Polonezköy 251

12 FAST FACTS 253

1 Fast Facts: Istanbul 253
2 Airline, Hotel & Car Rental Websites 257

13 USEFUL TURKISH TERMS & PHRASES 260

1 Pronunciation Guide 261
2 Basic Vocabulary 261
3 Glossary of Terms 263
4 The Turkish Menu 265

INDEX 270

General Index 270
Accommodations Index 278
Restaurant Index 278

LIST OF MAPS

Turkey 3
Istanbul. 4
Byzantine Constantinople 15
Istanbul at a Glance 59
Istanbul in 1, 2 & 3 Days 64
Where to Stay on the Historic Peninsula. 73
Where to Stay in Beyoğlu 83
Where to Dine on the Historic Peninsula. 101
Where to Dine in Beyoğlu. 111
Exploring Istanbul. 126
Exploring the Historic Peninsula. 129
Ayasofya. 131
Grand Bazaar 133
Topkapı Palace 141
Walking Tour 1: Galata. 193
Walking Tour 2: Istanbul Underground 199
Walking Tour 3: From the Land Walls to Balat & Fener 203
Bursa 239

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks are in order for a handful of incredibly wonderful and supportive individuals. Thanks to Sırma, Sıla, Yaşar, Tuğba & Mustafa, Aydın, Suha, Süleyman, and Hakan for their professional assistance and personal friendship. Each has been instrumental in supporting me in my work on this guide and in introducing me to the soul of Turkey. Warm thanks also go out to the people and the country of Turkey for exposing me to countless true friendships made during the course of working in Turkey. Special thanks are also in order for Melinda Quintero, my editor, for her astute edits and tireless perfectionism, and for making us both look good.

HOW TO CONTACT US

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places—hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please write to:

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AN ADDITIONAL NOTE

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time—and this is especially true of prices. We therefore suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

FROMMER'S STAR RATINGS, ICONS & ABBREVIATIONS

Every hotel, restaurant, and attraction listing in this guide has been ranked for quality, value, service, amenities, and special features using a **star-rating system.** In country, state, and regional guides, we also rate towns and regions to help you narrow down your choices and budget your time accordingly. Hotels and restaurants are rated on a scale of zero (recommended) to three stars (exceptional). Attractions, shopping, nightlife, towns, and regions are rated according to the following scale: zero stars (recommended), one star (highly recommended), two stars (very highly recommended), and three stars (must-see).

In addition to the star-rating system, we also use **seven feature icons** that point you to the great deals, in-the-know advice and unique experiences that separate travelers from tourists. Throughout the book, look for:

Finds	Special finds—those places only insiders know about
Fun Facts	Fun facts—details that make travelers more informed and their trips more fun
Kids	Best bets for kids, and advice for the whole family
Moments	Special moments—those experiences that memories are made of
Overrated	Places or experiences not worth your time or money
Tips	Insider tips—great ways to save time and money
Value	Great values—where to get the best deals

The following **abbreviations** are used for credit cards:

AE American Express
DC Diners Club
DISC Discover
MC MasterCard
V Visa

TRAVEL RESOURCES AT FROMMERS.COM

Frommer's travel resources don't end with this guide. Frommer's website, **www.frommers.com**, has travel information on more than 4,000 destinations. We update features regularly, giving you access to the most current trip-planning information and the best airfare, lodging, and car-rental bargains. You can also listen to podcasts, connect with other Frommers.com members through our active-reader forums, share your travel photos, read blogs from guidebook editors and fellow travelers, and much more.

1

Best of Istanbul

First-time visitors to Istanbul often leave home with foggy yet preconceived notions about this storied and mysterious destination. And while visitors will have their own opinions and ideas on what to look forward to, in Istanbul, they all have a ring of truth. Istanbul, like Turkey, is simultaneously many and often bewilderingly contradictory things: ancient and modern, Western and Oriental, religious and secular, conservative and progressive, wondrous and ordinary, familiar and exotic. But there is one undeniable common denominator among all of these disparate and contradictory traits: Istanbul is growing more and more interesting by the day. Juxtaposed against the unstoppable machine of progress are layers upon layers of ancient civilization, where housing renovations or urban renewal projects invariably uncover groundbreaking evidence of Istanbul's stature throughout the centuries. If you need proof that Istanbul is as momentous as Rome, as captivating as Paris, and—if you know where to go—as exotic as Bangkok, then you've picked up the right book.

A city that straddles Europe and Asia, Istanbul is a symbol of greatness, coveted historically by everyone from Xerxes all the way down the historical dateline through World War I, when Russia was green with envy over the possibilities of what free passage through the Bosphorus Straits could do for its economy.

The traditions inherited from the past 2,500 years of history (although recent discoveries backdate the city by thousands of years) are most evident in the Old City, known as Old Stamboul or the Historic Peninsula. A stroll through this open-air museum reveals an ancient Roman hippodrome, underground cisterns, and architectural icons, all representing the greatest excesses of the Byzantine Empire and the mystique and power of the Ottoman Empire. As a religious center (the heart of the Greek Orthodox Church as well as the Islamic faith for centuries), this old section of Istanbul is the custodian of two of the world's most important cultural heritages and home to some of the world's most opulent displays of art and wealth. Early Greek civilization left us the building blocks for Rome and Byzantium, which swathed these earlier foundations in rich mosaics and left their mark with monuments such as the Hippodrome and Ayasofya. Even Sultan Fatih Mehmet II was astounded at the beauty of the city he had finally conquered. The Ottoman dynasty redirected the city's fortunes into the imperial majesty of undulating domes and commanding minarets, and the sumptuousness of Topkapı Palace.

Across the Golden Horn is the modern heart of the city, custodian of the latter centuries of the Ottoman Empire and heir to the future of the country. This, the "modern" city, pulsates with all the electricity of a cutting-edge international metropolis. Although the political capital sits safely in the heartland, this part of Istanbul projects itself into the world as Turkey's ambassador of art, entertainment, music, and education. Meanwhile on the Asian side of the Bosphorus sprawl residential neighborhoods and commercial centers more reminiscent of Europe than the area's counterpart on the European side.

Together, these and Istanbul's other neighborhoods provide a home to 23 million-plus of the 74 million people living in Turkey, many of whom are modest village folk who've migrated to the big city out of economic need. Over pricey brunches, the residents of the

more prosperous neighborhoods along the Bosphorus revile the poor wedged into the squalid back streets of Süleymaniye, Çarşamba, and Tarlabaşı, while the religious fundamentalists of the Fatih and Üsküdar neighborhoods stare out through their veils in disapproval.

As a complex society in transition, and a microcosm of the tug of war between East and West, Istanbul is still a work in progress. It is a work of monumental proportions. Yet Istanbul is so exotic, wonderful, complex, and utterly captivating, that once experienced, it'll be impossible to break free from its spell.

1 THE MOST UNFORGETTABLE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

- **Taking a *hamam:*** The Turkish bath, rising out of the Islamic requirement of cleanliness, is not just practical; it's relaxing as well. A good *hamam* experience includes the proper traditional ambience and a heavy-handed scrubbing. For historical value, you can't beat the **Çemberlitaş Hamamı.** But if you want the royal treatment, reserve a time posthaste at **Les Ottomans Caudelie Vinotherapie Spa,** the **Çırağan Palace Sanitas Spa,** the **Sofa Hotel Taylife Spa,** or one of the other deluxe hotel *hamams.* See p. 152.
- **Attending a performance of the Ottoman Mehter Band:** The underappreciated Military Museum in Harbiye puts on two daily half-hour performances of what was once the avant-garde of the fearless and brutal Ottoman army. It's a powerful performance of sound and visuals, and truly not to be missed. See p. 158.
- **Wandering the streets behind the Egyptian Spice Market:** It's just as much fun outside as it is inside the market, where purveyors of produce set their prepared foods out on the streets for the local lunch crowd. Bring wet wipes. See p. 158.
- **Discovering the Grand Bazaar:** Nobody should pass through Turkey without spending a day at the mother of all shopping malls. The pseudo-exotic atmosphere crackles with the electricity of the hunt—but are you the hunter or the hunted? The excitement is tangible, even if you're on the trail of a simple pair of elf shoes or an evil-eye talisman. When the salesman turns away from you in disgust, you've learned the bottom price for an item. See chapter 9.
- **Taking a boat ride up the Bosphorus:** Nowhere else in the world can you cross to another continent every 15 minutes. Connecting trade routes from the East to the West, it's no surprise that any conqueror who was anybody had his sights set on the Bosphorus. Floating in the wake of Jason and the Argonauts and Constantine the Great, sit back and enjoy the breezes, the stately wooden manses, the monumental Ottoman domes, and the fortresses that helped win battles. See p. 183.
- **Stumbling over a small herd of sheep in Balat:** This is one of the countless neighborhoods in Istanbul in transition, where old, dilapidated structures are getting the recognition they deserve. It's really just a matter of time before Starbucks moves in; but while I can't promise you sheep on your visit, if you go there soon, you will witness the character of the city before it started looking European. See chapter 8.
- **Soaking up the atmosphere at the Pierre Loti cafe:** The views of the Golden Horn from this hilltop make

BLACK SEA
BULGARIA
GREECE
GEORGIA
ARMENIA
IRAN
SYRIA
IRAQ
LEBANON
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
TURKEY
ISTANBUL
ANKARA
Cappadocia
Pontic Mts.
Taurus Mts.
Kurdistan
Gulf of Antalya
Aegean Sea
Sea of Marmara
Lesbos
Kos
Rhodes
Karpathos
Kırklareli
Edirne
Keşan
Gallipoli
Biga
Çannakale
Edremit
Bergama
Çeşme
Bodrum
Marmaris
Dalaman
Fethiye
Kaş
Kekova
Anamur
Alanya
Silifke
Mut
Ermenek
Manavgat
Elmalı
Ortaca
Akseki
Antalya
Karaman
Gölhisar
Muğla
Denizli
Kuşadası
Ode
Izmir
Uşak
Murat Dağı
Kütahya
Bursa
Balıkesir
Yalova
Kocaeli
Şile
Ereğli
Sinop
Kastemonu
Karabük
Bafra
Samsun
Çankırı
Merzifon
Gerede
Beypazarı
Sakarya
Eskişehir
Kırıkkale
Yozgat
Sivrihisar
Bolvadin
Tuz Gölü
Nevşehir
Ürgüp
Kayseri
Aksaray
Konya
Niğde
Beyşehir Gölü
Hoyran Gölü
Menderes
Gediz
Bosphorus
İznik Gölü
Kızıl Irmak
Çorum
Erbaa
Turhal
Kelkit
Gümüşhane
Giresun
Ordu
Trabzon
Rize
Artvin
Batumi
Poti
Rioni
Kura
Ardahan
Kars
Oltu
Yerevan
Araks
Çoruh
Bayburt
Erzincan
Euphrates
Erzurum
Mt. Ararat
Doğubayazıt
Malazgirt
Tunceli
Kemaliye
Elazığ
Malatya
Bitlis
Van
Van Gölü
Murat
Diyarbakır
Adiyaman
Göksun
Osmaniye
Adana
Tarsus
Seyhan
Tigris
Cizre
Viranşehir
Şanlıurfa
Kilis
Iskenderun
Hatay
Aleppo
Latakia
Tripoli
Beirut
Damascus
Silifke
Içel
Great Zab
Arbil
Kirkuk
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Ukraine
Kaz.
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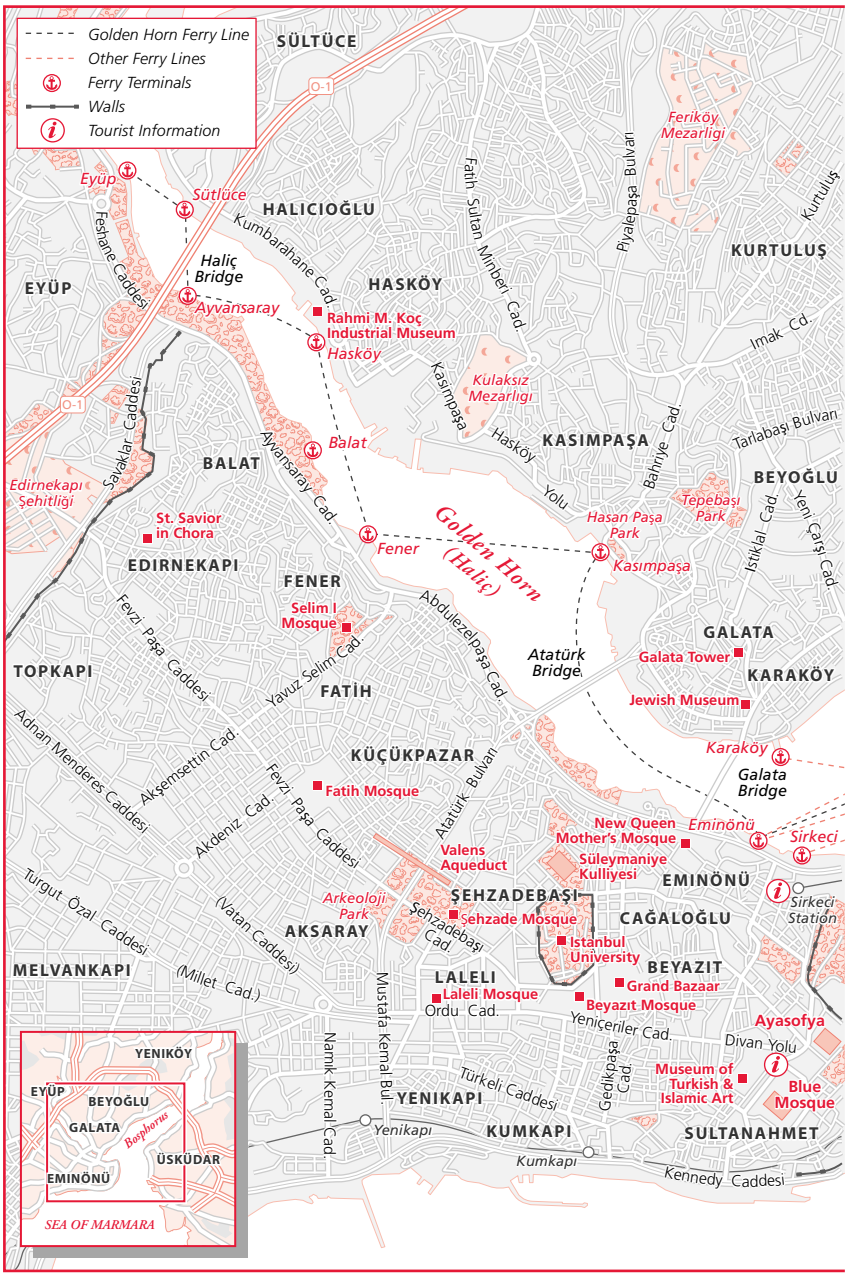
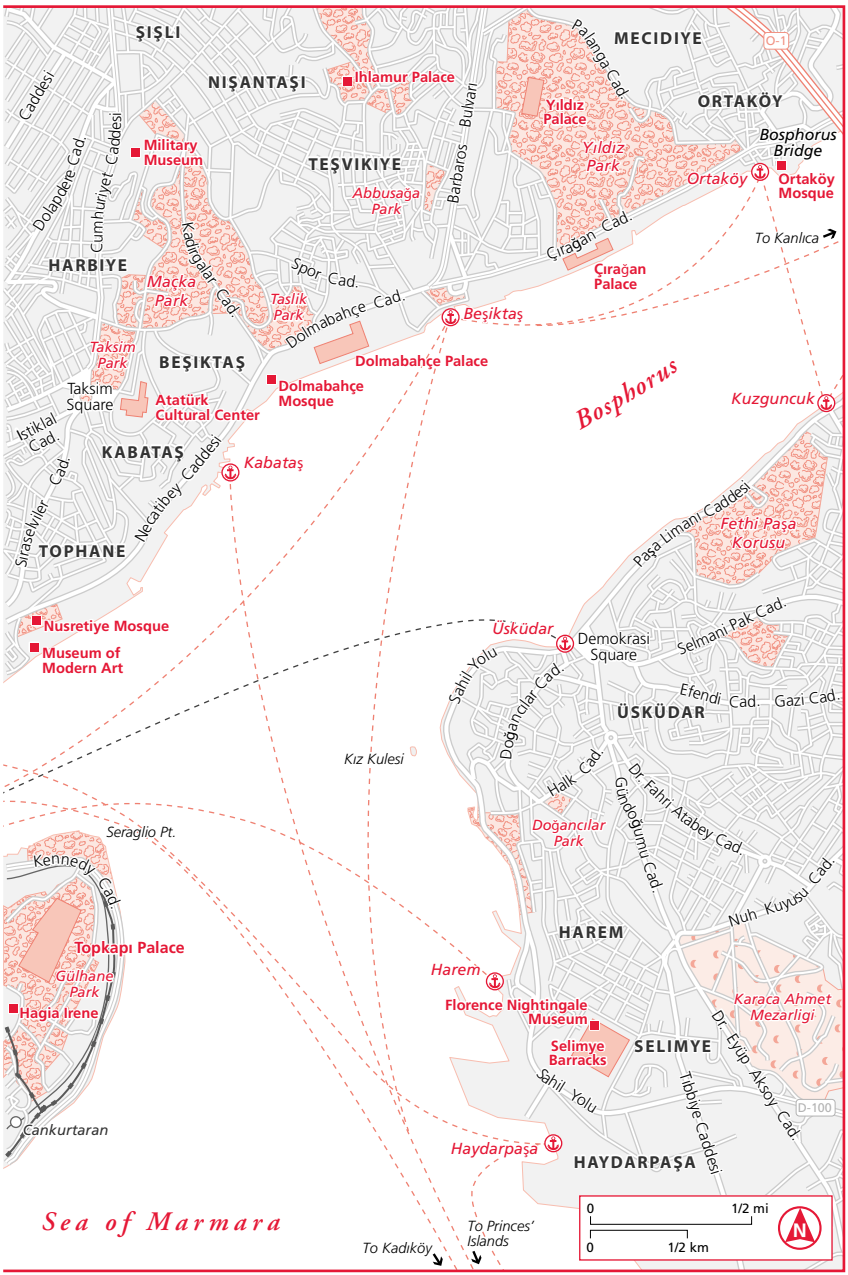

Golden Horn Ferry Line
Other Ferry Lines
Ferry Terminals
Walls
Tourist Information
SÜLTÜCE
Eyüp
Sütlüce
HALICIOĞLU
Haliç Bridge
EYÜP
Ayvansaray
HASKÖY
Rahmi M. Koç Industrial Museum
Hasköy
Feriköy Mezarlığı
Piyalepaşa Bulvarı
Kurtuluş
KURTULUŞ
Fatih Sultan Mehmet Cad.
Kumbarahane Cad.
Fesh ane Caddesi
O-1
Kasımpaşa
Külaksız Mezarlığı
İmak Cd.
Hasköy Yolu
KASIMPAŞA
Bahriye Cad.
Tarlabaşı Bulvarı
BEYOĞLU
Tepebaşı Park
İstiklal Cad.
Yeni Çarşı Cad.
Hasan Paşa Park
Kasımpaşa
Golden Horn (Haliç)
Fener
Balat
Ayvansaray Cad.
Saraçlar Caddesi
BALAT
Edirnekapı Şehitliği
St. Savior in Chora
EDIRNEKAPI
FENER
Selim I Mosque
Fevzi Paşa Caddesi
Yavuz Selim Cad.
Abdülezelpaşa Cad.
Atatürk Bridge
GALATA
Galata Tower
KARAKÖY
Jewish Museum
TOPKAPI
FATİH
Adnan Menderes Caddesi
Akşemsettin Cad.
KÜÇÜKPAZAR
Fatih Mosque
Karaköy
Galata Bridge
Akdeniz Cad.
Fevzi Paşa Caddesi
Atatürk Bulvarı
New Queen Mother's Mosque
Eminönü
Sirkeci
Valens Aqueduct
Süleymaniye Külliyesi
EMİNÖNÜ
Turgut Özal Caddesi
Arkeoloji Park
ŞEHZADEBAŞI
Sirkeci Station
Şehzade Mosque
Şehzadebaşı Cad.
CAĞALOĞLU
AKSARAY
(Vatan Caddesi)
İstanbul University
BEYAZIT
MELVANKAPI
(Millet Cad.)
LALELI
Laleli Mosque
Grand Bazaar
Ordu Cad.
Beyazıt Mosque
Yeniçeriler Cad.
Ayasofya
Divan Yolu
Mustafa Kemal Bul.
Namık Kemal Cad.
Türkeli Caddesi
Gedikpaşa Cad.
Museum of Turkish & Islamic Art
Blue Mosque
YENIKAPI
Yenikapı
KUMKAPI
SULTANAHMET
Kumkapı
Kennedy Caddesi
YENIKÖY
EYÜP
BEYOĞLU
GALATA
Bosphorus
ÜSKÜDAR
EMİNÖNÜ
SEA OF MARMARA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HAREM
SELIMYE
HAYDARPAŞA
Ihlamur Palace
Military Museum
Yıldız Palace
Yıldız Park
Abbusağa Park
Bosphorus Bridge
Ortaköy
Ortaköy Mosque
To Kanlıca
Çırağan Palace
Maçka Park
Taslık Park
Taksim Park
Taksim Square
Atatürk Cultural Center
Dolmabahçe Mosque
Dolmabahçe Palace
Beşiktaş
Bosphorus
Kuzguncuk
Kabataş
Nusretiye Mosque
Museum of Modern Art
Fethi Paşa Korusu
Üsküdar
Demokrasi Square
Doğancılar Park
Kız Kulesi
Seraglio Pt.
Topkapı Palace
Gülhane Park
Hagia Irene
Kennedy Cad.
Cankurtaran
Harem
Florence Nightingale Museum
Selimye Barracks
Karaca Ahmet Mezarligi
Haydarpaşa
Sea of Marmara
To Kadıköy
To Princes' Islands
Palanga Cad.
Barbaros Bulvarı
Çırağan Cad.
Spor Cad.
Dolmabahçe Cad.
Kadırgalar Cad.
Cumhuriyet Caddesi
Dolapdere Cad.
Istiklal Cad.
Sıraselviler Cad.
Necatibey Caddesi
Paşa Limanı Caddesi
Selmanı Pak Cad.
Efendi Cad.
Gazi Cad.
Sahil Yolu
Doğancılar Cad.
Halk Cad.
Dr. Fahri Atabey Cad.
Gündoğumu Cad.
Nuh Kuyusu Cad.
Dr. Eyüp Aksoy Cad.
Tıbbiye Caddesi
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the trip to Pierre Loti worth the detour. Take a walk through the picturesque cemetery adjacent to the cafe; then wander down to Eyüp to see parades of princely looking boys on the eve of their circumcision ceremony. See p. 157.

- **Sharing tea with the locals:** Tea is at the center of Turkish culture; no significant negotiation takes place without a cup or three. But more than commerce, tea stops the hands of time in Turkey; it renews the bonds of friends and family. Having tea is inevitable, as is the invitation to share a glass with a total stranger. Accept the invitation: There's more to a glass than just a hot drink.
- **Buying a carpet, whether you plan to or not:** Come on, you know you want to. And whatever it is that you buy, whether you overpay or not, whether your salesman is naughty or nice, I guarantee you will be talking about the experience for years to come. See p. 212.
- **Rejuvenating your spirit at the ceremony of the Whirling Dervişes at Galata Mevlevihanesi:** The same repetitive whirling and soothing tones of the sufi mystics designed to create a sense of union between the derviş and God will undoubtedly entrance you as well. See p. 179.

2 THE BEST MUSEUMS, MOSQUES & CHURCHES

- **Blue Mosque:** This landmark mosque assumes a stance of authority over Sultanahmet Park. Just under the dome, hundreds of stained-glass windows sparkle like jewels until you are convinced that you're in the presence of a celestial being. The blue of the mosque actually changes to yellow, orange, and red, depending on the time of day. See p. 130.
- **Ayasofya:** When faced with the dome of this masterpiece, it's tempting to mimic the actions of Mehmet the Conqueror almost 600 years ago and drop to your knees in a gesture of utter humility. The sensation is intensified by the low level of filtered light that finds its way in, temporarily blinding you to everything except the source of illumination. See p. 150.
- **Topkapı Palace:** Perspective check—this was once somebody's *house.* Actually, it was the home of a whole lot of people—up to 5,000 at a time, all in the service of one man. The sultan surrounded himself with the most beautiful women in the world. He collected the most precious treasures of the East. He assembled the most sacred relics of the Muslim faith under this roof. Six hundred years of Ottoman history lie behind these grand ornamental gates. See p. 138.
- **Istanbul Archaeology Museum:** This is one of those must-see museums that all too many overlook. It's actually the largest museum in the country, chronicling in stone both the lives of Byzantium's emperors and of Istanbul. Recovered artifacts date back to 6000 B.C. and proceed through the centuries. A separate building houses the Museum of the Ancient Orient, exhibiting artifacts obtained during the course of the Ottoman period. See p. 136.
- **St. Savior in Chora:** An empire's devotion to the faith is mirrored in the opulence of the finest preserved collections of Byzantine mosaics just about anywhere. See p. 150.

3 THE BEST THINGS TO DO FOR FREE (OR ALMOST)

- **Toasting the lights of the Old City at dusk:** It's a magical sight to watch the lights of the Old City come to life. From a rooftop bar in Beyoğlu or a *nargile* cafe on the Galata Bridge (okay, not necessarily free), you can watch the monuments light up one by one. If you're on the ground in Sultanahmet, it's impossible not to enjoy the poetry of the sea gulls in flight circling under the spotlights of the Blue Mosque.
- **Crossing the Galata Bridge on foot:** Fishermen line the railings above, while dinner (or tea, or backgammon) is served below as the majestic and inspiring silhouettes of the Süleymaniye, Rüstem Paşa, and Yeni Camii loom in the distance. If you wait until after sunset, you get to see the sea gulls circling the minarets.
- **Strolling along the city's defensive walls:** Ancient history is juxtaposed against the present-day neighborhoods at Yedikule, Edirnekapı, and Ayvansaray, each reflecting its own interpretation of Turkey's past, present, and future.

4 THE BEST ONE-OF-A-KIND PLACES TO STAY

- **Çırağan Palace** (✆ **0212/258-3377;** www.kempinski-istanbul.com): More than just Istanbul's original posh hotel, the Çırağan Palace is a destination in its own right. The grandeur of the lobby—tinted by light coming through the stained glass and imbued with the fragrance of fresh roses—hardly prepares you for what's to come. Expect regal gardens, a delicious Bosphorus-side pool, big fluffy beds, and flawless service. Make sure you splurge for that sea view, or all bets are off. See p. 161.
- **Four Seasons Hotel** (✆ **0212/381-3000;** www.fourseasons.com): Nothing drives home the magnitude of this hotel's history more than watching a former political prisoner once incarcerated here break down and cry in the hallway. Some original tile and marble details were preserved and reused in the renovation, and you might encounter the rough etchings of an inmate's name in one of the columns. But these days the unqualified opulence and comfort of this grand hotel couldn't be further from its bread-and-water past. The new **Four Seasons the Bosphorus** (✆ **0212/638-8200**) promises the royal treatment—but without the historic background. See p. 72.
- **Les Ottomans** (✆ **0212/359-1500;** www.lesottomans.com): You'll find rooms truly fit for royalty here, if you can get a reservation. Every detail, from the chandeliers, to the salon chairs, to the bedding, is a unique creation that screams "one of a kind." The very personalized nature of the hotel foreshadows the high standard of hospitality. See p. 91.
- **Sumahan** (✆ **0216/422-8000;** www.sumahan.com): A traditional *hamam* is the bonus feature in four of the hotel's rooms, while the rest of them make do with luxurious slate marble bathroom suites. Enough with the bathrooms; the hotel itself is a restored grain alcohol factory. See p. 93.

Tips Best Views

Istanbul is a city of rooftops, attracting refugees from the sticky Mediterranean summers up above the eaves for a breath of fresh sea air. Are the views the bonus, or are the breezes? You decide.

For the cost of a cocktail or a meal, you'll be seduced by views of the city, each revealing an angle of Istanbul you may not have otherwise noticed. The rooftop bars and restaurants of Beyoglu take advantage of panoramas that include the Old City, the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn, and everything in between. Check out the bar at **Mikla** (or spring for a meal; p. 109), **Panorama,** the Marmara Hotel's top-flight restaurant, or **360 Istanbul** (p. 235), whose very name begs the question: Need I say more? On the Asian side, from Kanlıca, the view is down the Bosphorus to the Fatih Bridge; farther south from Çengelköy the waterfront cafes and restaurants bask in the nighttime glow of the Bosphorus Bridge. In the Old City, practically any hotel or restaurant with a rooftop offers multiple best seats in the house.

Now, the freebies (or almost free). One of the finest panoramas in the Old City is from the north side of the courtyard of the **Süleymaniye Mosque and Complex** (p. 159). The prolific architect, in service to Süleyman the Magnificent and considered the Ottoman era's preeminent architect, strategically sited his crown jewel on the city's highest point to take advantage of the commanding vistas. From the rear of the courtyard, the view is a straight shot over the Galata Bridge and up the Bosphorus.

For those naughty enough to go to Istanbul without any plans to visit Topkapı Palace, amazing views of the Marmara Sea can be had along the path leading from the outer, public courtyard down to the parking lot. Dozens of boats each day park themselves on this side of the peninsula awaiting clearance into the traffic-choked Bosphorus Straits.

5 THE BEST FOOD EXPERIENCES

- **Noshing waterside at Eminönü:** For 12 to 14 hours a day, the Tarıhı Eminönü Balıkçısı grills fresh fish quayside, wrapped in a roll and presented for a spectacular 3TL by a gracious man in traditional costume. Grab your sandwich and step aside; the condiments are to the right on the railing. See p. 108.
- **Develi:** No visit to Istanbul is complete for me without a visit to Develi. Dine on their spicy *lahmacun, içli köfte,* raw *çiğ köfte,* and you'll be stuffed before the pistachio kebap arrives. See p. 108.
- **Melting Kanlıca yogurt in your mouth:** For more than 100 years, creamy rich yogurt has been a specialty of the tiny Bosphorus-front village of Kanlıca, on the upper Asian side. It's a heck of a haul for a cup of yogurt, but oh, what glorious spoonfuls they are. See p. 187.

If you've already paid the admission fee for **Topkapı Palace** (p. 138), the numerous corners with views of the Marmara Sea and the Bosphorus are yours to enjoy. The really staggering ones are in the rear (fourth courtyard), which all at once faces the Marmara Sea, the Bosphorus, and Asia. A great photo op would be under the small Iftariye Pavilion, where during Ramadan the sultan would break his fast with the *iftar* meal. Because the pavilion faces north, the views include the Golden Horn. If you've bought your ticket to the Harem, you'll see that the sultan's favorites also got some pretty good real estate, residing in apartments from which, on a clear day, they could see as far as the Princes' Islands.

You may want to sit down and enjoy the vistas over a cup of tea, coffee, or Turkish wine. From the Malta Köşkü in **Yıldız Park** (p. 163), the cool breezes waft over the treetops down to the Bosphorus. If you're into the romance of tragedy, the lore surrounding **Pierre Loti** (p. 157) up along the Golden Horn is the place to absorb the meaning of love lost while contemplating the rebirth of the waterway formerly blighted by industry (and isn't it all so photogenic?).

From the wharf up in **Ortaköy** (p. 69), you can see the floodlit Ortaköy Mosque dangling off its pier, and the twinkling lights of Asia on the opposite shore.

In the evenings, the domes and minarets of the **Old City** light up, acting as a magnet for scores of sea gulls. If you haven't already fallen in love with Istanbul, this is the view that will do it. Grab a seat at one of the east-facing pubs along the **Galata Bridge,** or just stand immobilized by the majesty over on the wharf of **Karaköy.**

- **Morning *simit* from a street vendor:** I grew up on sesame bagels, so call me biased, but these doughy little morning delicacies really do hit the spot. Spread some cheese on one (or slather with butter and jam) and weep. See p. 108.
- **Eating your way through Ortaköy:** This neighborhood is particularly vibrant on a summer evening, with the lights twinkling beneath the Bosphorus Bridge. The streets behind the mosque are a food fair of Turkish fast-food stalls selling such things as stuffed mussels (for the fearless) and potatoes to drown in your preferred toppings. See p. 108.
- **Dining at Asitane:** Many restaurants bill themselves as "Ottoman," but few of them can actually boast of having translated the recipes from the kitchens of Topkapı. See p. 107.
- **Lunch at a *lokanta:*** These unassuming eateries have some of the best home-style food around. Casseroles and stews such as *moussaka* or *orman kebap* (lamb stew with potatoes and carrots) are the types of labor-intensive dishes the tourist places can't be bothered to prepare. If you have time, indulge your senses at **Çiya.** See p. 96.

The Best Turkey Websites

- **www.kultur.gov.tr** is the official site of the Turkish Ministry of Culture, and an excellent source for information and links to the country's major arts events.
- **www.tourismturkey.org** is the website of the Ministry of Tourism.
- **www.hurriyet.com** and **www.todayszamam.com/tz-web**, the sites for two of Turkey's major dailies, allow you to plug into real-time issues in English.
- **www.mymerhaba.com** is for expatriates by expatriates, but we like to eavesdrop on them, too.
- **http://cat.une.edu.au** provides a wealth of coordinated information on all archaeological works being conducted in Turkey. Information is arranged by age and by site.
- **www.istanbul2010.org** is the go-to site for all things cultural happening in Istanbul during the city's reign as cultural capital of Europe.
- **www.byzantium1200.com** is a nonprofit research project whose goal is to create computer models of Constantinople and its monuments during the Byzantine era. Models are constructed based on all available information, including scholarly and historic accounts as well as historical paintings, and depict buildings, structures, and monuments as they would have appeared in 1200 had they been optimally maintained (by 1200, much of the city was, in reality, in an irretrievable state of decay). Byzantium 1200 also puts out a companion guide to the Byzantine sites in Istanbul called *Walking Thru B yzantium.*

6 THE BEST STUFF TO BRING HOME

- **Carpets and *kilims:*** Turkey's tribal carpets and *kilims* represent a cultural tradition that goes back for centuries. No matter how lame your bargaining skills, it's still cheaper than Bloomingdale's—and boy, do they look good unrolled under (or on) your coffee table.
- **Pottery and ceramics:** These arts thrived under the Ottomans, whose skilled craftsmen perfected the coral red and cobalt blue of the Iznik tile. No one has ever been able to reproduce the intensity of these colors, until now. The only authentic reproductions come out of the **Iznik Foundation**'s workshop and showroom (p. 216) in Iznik, but they are distributed widely at finer-quality shops. Ordinary but equally stunning porcelain designs on white clay come from Kuthaya (the painting is done at private workshops) and are sold throughout Turkey.
- **Textiles:** Check the manufacturer's label on your fine linens, terry-cloth supplies, and cotton T-shirts. I bet you didn't realize it, but Turkey exports a huge amount of textiles, supplying the raw materials for well-known retailers such as OP, Calvin Klein, Walt Disney, and Banana Republic. Many Istanbul residents head out of town to Bursa (p. 237) or Pamukkale to stock up on plush towels and terry-cloth robes, but

you can also find top-quality clothing and bath towels at Home Goods in Akmerkez and at any branch of Mudo (among others).

- **Copper:** Turks use copper for everything, probably because it looks so good (particularly the white copper). Tea servers with triangular handles pass you by countless times a day; the wide copper platters that double as tables represent typical Turkish style. Those shiny white bowls you see in a *hamam* are copper, too. For the best prices and widest selection, head to **Çadırcılar Caddesi,** near the Grand Bazaar. See p. 216.
- **Gold and silver:** Shopping thoroughfares glitter with the stuff—some of it attractive, some of it hideous. The **Istanbul Handicrafts Center** (p. 224) has an atelier where artisans craft their own work. Museum gift shops are also great sources of unique jewelry.
- **Foodstuffs:** The exoticism of the East is in full bloom at Istanbul's **Egyptian Spice Bazaar,** where you can find spices with prowess you never knew they had. Specialty stores and *şarcüteris* (small groceries selling deli-style meats and cheeses) in the **Galatasaray Fish Market** (Balıkpazarı) in Beyoğlu marinate a variety of delectable little morsels in sealed jars ready-made to take home. Although this isn't Tuscany, you wouldn't know it by the quality of the olive oil; head over to the local supermarket and stock up on a few of the higher-end bottles. Don't forget the wine; several Turkish vintages are walking away with industry awards, such as Doluca's özel Kav Bogazkere-Oküzküzü 2000 and 2001, Kavaklidere's Selection Kirmizi 1997, and özel Kirmizi 2003 and 2002.

2

Istanbul in Depth

The history of Istanbul reads like an encyclopedia of ancient and modern civilizations, as virtually every major player, from Greece's Alexander the Great, to Persia's Cyrus, to the long lineup of Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman emperors and sultans, fought and won control of this city on the Straits. Notwithstanding the pillaging, each ruler left his (and sometimes her) mark on the city; and as recent excavations show, it's impossible to swing a trowel without hitting archaeological pay dirt. Below is a brief intro to help you navigate the centuries.

1 ISTANBUL TODAY

By the time you read this, Istanbul will still be riding the high from its reign as European Cultural Capital 2010. But the question still remains: Is Istanbul European? Well, yes and no. Geologically, Istanbul sits atop both Europe and Asia. But in every other facet—history, culture, music, cuisine—the delineation isn't so clear. What is clear, though, is that the city is fast becoming Europe's, Asia's, and even the world's most exclusive ticket. While the rest of the world hunkers down amid a global recession, Istanbul pulsates with the energy of popularity, progress, and its very own aggressive brand of capitalism. Upscale restaurants, cafes, and opera houses are packed, even on weekdays. New, über-deluxe ventures by celebrity chefs and hoteliers serve as magnets for the international and moneyed elite. And the artistic scene is growing, thriving, and nurturing the next generation of writers, directors, artists, designers, and filmmakers. Even environmental consciousness and a new attention on healthy living is taking hold via all-organic boutique hotels, organic groceries, and yoga classes around town.

Yet amid all of this, well, Europeanization, Istanbul is reacting like a microcosm of globalization: Every move upward, outward, westward, and forward is met with resistance and even backlash, most conspicuously on view via the struggle over the headscarf. As in any major cosmopolitan city, the economic (and especially here, the cultural) striations are pronounced. Women in chadors are increasingly strolling through Sultanahmet, down Istiklal Caddesi, or through the tony streets of Nişantaşı; low-wage workers and craftsmen flood the streets of Eminönü, Karaköy, and Tarlabaşı; adolescent shoeshine boys along Istiklal double as would-be gigolos; child-urchins hawk tissues and bottled water along the city's major arteries. And yes, the authorities do apprehend homegrown terrorists from time to time. It's a push-me, pull-me environment beneath the white-glove, "whatever, whenever" style service increasingly offered by hotels to their discriminating clientele. As the European Union wrestles with the prospect of Turkish E.U. membership, the European bloc is betting on Istanbul as a European front-runner by deluging the city with foreign investment and hosting (so to speak) Istanbul's 2010 debutante ball. The question then is: Who will take charge over the cleanup after the party's over?

2 HISTORY 101

ISTANBUL IN PREHISTORY

During the ice age, the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea were mere freshwater lakes, separated by two valleys now known as the Bosphorus and Dardanelle straits. Around 6000 B.C., with the melting of the ice caps, the sea rose up to overflow its banks; discoveries in prehistoric settlements in the Kadıköy, Fıkırtepe, and Pendik districts of Istanbul include organic remains of life that could survive in both fresh and salt water. Prehistoric settlements were also discovered under the Hippodrome, at the Hagia Irene and Archaeology Museum; and more recently at Yenikapı, Üsküdar, and Sirkeci, during the excavations of the stations to serve the future Marmaray Rail. The discoveries at Yenikapı alone, which date to the 4th century B.C., have unceremoniously reset the clock on Istanbul's ancient history.

EARLY GREEK SETTLEMENTS

The earliest settlements in the region we now call Istanbul were founded by migrants from the Greek town of Megara around 660 B.C. The earliest historical reference we have of this time is of the Persian King Darius's conquest of the city in 512 B.C.—at that time, the "city" amounted to settlements in Calchedon (modern Kadıköy) and on the "promontory"—probably the hill that is now Sultanahmet.

In the latter half of the 4th century B.C., **Alexander the Great** swept through the settlements on the Bosphorus in his campaign against the Persians to annex all of Anatolia under **Macedonian/Greco** rule. Almost 2 centuries after his death, around 146 B.C., the city on the straits came under Roman domination.

NEW ROME

Under Roman rule, the city's early fortunes ebbed and flowed. When Septimus Severus (A.D. 197–211) encountered resistance to his self-proclamation as emperor of Rome, he simply razed the city to its foundations. It was during the rebuilding following these events that the Hippodrome and Obelisk were constructed. Under Severus's son, Caracalla, the city was known as Antonia or Antoniana. Emperor Valerian (A.D. 253–260) was confronted with raids by the Goths, while Diocletian (A.D. 284–350) instituted a doomed system of governmental reform, dividing the empire into two administrative units. It was a

DATELINE

- **ca. 4000 B.C.** Modern excavations in and around Üsküdar, Kadıköy, Sirkeci, and Yenikapı provide evidence of prehistoric settlements.
- **ca. 1200–700 B.C.** Migration of Greeks to Aegean coastal regions.
- **ca. 660 B.C.** Earliest documented settlement in Istanbul is founded by Greek settlers from Megara.
- **ca. 499 B.C.** Persians, led by Darius, sack the city and drive out the Greeks.
- **334 B.C.** Alexander the Great drives out the Persians.
- **146 B.C.** The city comes under Roman rule.
- **A.D. 197–211** Septimus Severus consolidates power; punishes the city by razing it to the ground.
- **A.D. 284** Diocletian reforms Roman administrative system.
- **A.D. 313** Edict of Milan establishes official tolerance of Christianity.
- **A.D. 330** Constantine establishes his capital of New Rome and then renames it Constantinople.
- **A.D. 360** Constantine builds the first Ayasofya.
- **A.D. 476** Fall of the Roman Empire; Constantinople emerges as capital of the Eastern Roman Empire.

continues

system destined to collapse into civil war; but the long-term effect was a more theological schism, as Christianity grew and took hold throughout the Empire. In the wake of Diocletian reform, **Constantine** (A.D. 324–337) emerged to establish his capital over that of previous Roman emperors, rebuilding the city to equal if not surpass the splendor of Rome. Six years later, in A.D. 330, its architectural eminence realized and with a sizeable population of around 200,000, the city was baptized "New Rome." The city was renamed Constantinopolis (or Constantinople) in honor of the emperor.

CONSTANTINOPLE, CITY OF THE WORLD'S DESIRE

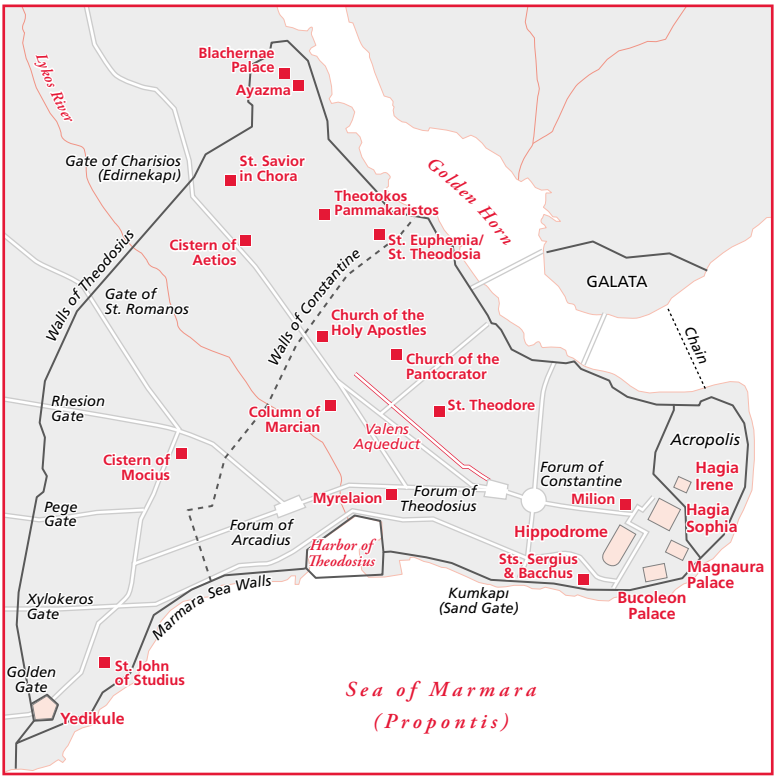
By the time Constantine had established imperial Roman power in Constantinople, his acceptance of Christianity was complete, having publicly espoused the faith in the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313, which mandated the tolerance of Christianity within the Roman Empire. Under **Theodosius,** paganism was outlawed and Christianity, by this time already widespread, was made the official religion of the state. By Theodosius's death in A.D. 395, the eastern and western provinces had grown apart ideologically, and the Roman Empire was divided in two. When Rome fell in A.D. 476, Constantinople emerged the dominant capital of the empire. But although predominantly Greek and Christian in culture, citizens of what we will now call Byzantium considered themselves Roman, and the leadership maintained a thoroughly Roman administration.

The reign of Emperor **Justinian** and his Queen **Theodora** (A.D. 527–565) inaugurated a period of great prosperity. Justinian's construction of the majestic Ayasofya (Church of Holy Wisdom) established Constantinople as the spiritual center of Christendom. Justinian commissioned new buildings and conducted restorations all across the empire—an undertaking so vast that it thrust the empire into economic crisis after his death.

Around the end of the 9th century A.D., a rivalry emerged between the Orthodox Church and the Papacy over the veneration of icons. The worship of idols was first condemned by **Emperor Leo III** in A.D. 726 and then reiterated by successive emperors. In 1054, over this and other theological disagreements, the pope severed any ties that had united Byzantium with the West.

Distracted by religious and bureaucratic disputes, the Byzantines were unprepared for the arrival of nomadic Turkish warrior tribes raiding the empire's lands in the east. In response, Byzantine Emperor

- **A.D. 527** Justinian and his Queen Theodora ascend the throne.
- **A.D. 537** The foundations of the Ayasofya are laid.
- **A.D. 553** Earthquake damages dome of Ayasofya.
- **A.D. 675** Eyüp Sultan leads Arab siege of the city.
- **A.D. 726** Leo III rejects the idea of icons.
- **1054** Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches split.
- **1071** Selçuks defeat Byzantine army at Malazgirt.
- **1204** The city is sacked in the 4th Crusade; Byzantine court establishes capital at Nicaea (Iznik, near Bursa).
- **1261** Michael VIII Palaeologus reclaims Constantinople.
- **1453** Mehmet the Conqueror takes Constantinople.
- **1492** Columbus discovers the New World.
- **1517** Ottomans conquer Egypt, and Istanbul becomes the center of Islam.
- **1826** Janissary massacred and corps abolished.
- **1854** Britain and France support Ottomans against Russia in the Crimean War.
- **1856** Treaty of Paris; Ottoman Empire accepted as a European state.
- **1878** The "Sick Man of Europe" progressively



deteriorates; Britain occupies Cyprus.

- **1881** Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) born in Salonika.
- **1908** Coup d'état led by Young Turks; Abdülhamid is deposed.
- **1914** Ottoman Empire enters World War I as ally of Germany.
- **1915** Turkish forces successfully repel Anzac forces at Battle of Gallipoli.
- **1918** Turks surrender; Allied forces enter Istanbul.
- **1919** Occupational Greek army lands at Smyrna; Atatürk leads national resistance.
- **1920** Grand National Assembly created in Ankara with Mustafa Kemal as president.
- **1922** Greeks driven from Anatolia; sultanate abolished.
- **1923** Treaty of Lausanne; the modern Republic of Turkey is formed with Atatürk as president; Ankara replaces Istanbul as capital.
- **1924** Caliphate abolished and all members of the Ottoman dynasty are sent into exile.
- **1938** Atatürk dies; Ismet Inönü becomes republic's second president.

continues

Alexius Comnenus turned to the Christians of western Europe for aid against the increasing threat of the Turks. And the first Crusade was launched.

The Selçuk Turks triumphed over the second Crusade in 1147, eventually setting up the **Sultanate of Rum** at Konya and achieving significant cultural growth and territorial expansion. In 1204 and allied with Venetian merchants who had an eye on the riches of the East, the Crusaders sacked and plundered Constantinople in the **fourth Crusade,** creating the Latin Empire of Constantinople and widening the schism between the churches of the East and West. Driven from Constantinople, the Byzantine court established a small empire in exile at Nicaea, creating a balance of power with the flourishing Selçuk Sultanate of Rum.

Michael VIII Palaeologus, ruler of the empire in exile, succeeded in reclaiming the city of Constantinople in 1261. Though their territory was drastically reduced, subsequent Byzantine emperors repeatedly tried to reunite the Orthodox and Catholic churches against the threat of invading Turks. This proved futile, and in 1453, **Mehmet II,** leading an army of Ottoman Turks, circumvented the Byzantine defenses of the Golden Horn by having his fleet carried, ship by ship (by means of a brilliantly engineered "movable path") over land, behind the Byzantine navy. After centuries of decline and decay, the Byzantine Empire had come to an end.

OTTOMAN ISTANBUL

With his victory over Constantinople, Mehmet II acquired the title of *fatih,* or conqueror, and named his new capital Istanbul, probably after having heard the Greeks say *"eis ten polin"* (to the city). He immediately began reconstruction, converting churches into mosques and repopulating the city with artisans, merchants, and farmers from all over the empire. The importance of sea power was not lost on Mehmet, who established control over the Black Sea and managed to capture some of rival Venice's islands in the Aegean. The city's importance as a naval and trading center was confirmed and Istanbul quickly became an international city with a mixture of cultures as Christians, Greeks, Armenians, and Jews all were welcomed by the sultan. After all, these diverse peoples brought with them a wealth of knowledge—and new tax revenues.

The long reign of Mehmet II's great grandson, **Süleyman the Lawgiver** (aka "The Magnificent"), was the golden age of the Ottoman Empire, distinguished by military successes, administrative organization, economic prosperity, social order, and cultural greatness. Both the city and

- **1945** Turkey declares war on Germany.
- **1946** Turkey becomes charter member of United Nations.
- **1952** Turkey joins NATO.
- **1960** Military coup.
- **1961** Army restores parliamentary government.
- **1964** Turkey granted associate member status in European Union.
- **1974** Turkey sends troops to northern Cyprus.
- **1980** Military coup d'état.
- **1999** Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan jailed for treason and sentenced to death. Two major earthquakes rock the province of Istanbul in August and November, killing an estimated 20,000 people.
- **2002–03** Justice and Development Party (AKP) wins landslide victory.
- **2003** Terrorist bombing at Istanbul synagogue, the British Embassy, and HSBC Bank.
- **2005** E.U. accession talks officially begin and are projected to last at least a decade.
- **2009** Turkey and Armenia establish diplomatic relations.
- **2010** Istanbul reigns (along with Pécs, Hungary, and Essen, Germany) as European Cultural Capital.

Fun Facts The Tulip Period

While wandering Topkapı Palace, or even the Grand Bazaar, you will see spindly tulips in designs on everything from Iznik tile to silk scarves. The early 18th century in Ottoman history is known as **Lâle Devri,** or the Tulip Period. The word "tulip" is actually derived from the Ottoman Turkish word for gauze *(tülbend),* which was used to wrap turbans. The Tulip Period is not only associated with a flowering of the arts but also with court society's collective obsession with the flower. Tulips, which are native to central Asia, became the dominant decorative motif, filled the gardens of the Ottoman elite, and were the source of endless festivals.

It was actually through the Ottomans that the tulip first came to western Europe. In the 16th century, a Dutch ambassador to the Ottoman Empire returned home with a few bulbs and touched off a fad that has forever since associated Holland with the tulip. By 1637, Holland had developed a sophisticated tulip bulb market, in which batches of bulbs were worth more than the average Dutchman's yearly income.

the empire flourished under his direction; the population grew, road and caravansary networks were extended, trade prospered, and his military machine enjoyed success after success.

OTTOMAN ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The Ottoman ruling class was organized into five Imperial Institutions: the military; the scribes, or "men of the pen"; the *ulema,* Muslim leaders educated in theology and law assigned the task of religious leadership, education, and justice; and the Inner and Outer Palace Services who took care of the general day-to-day administration of the palace and care of the sultan.

Through territorial conquest, the sultan was provided with a steady supply of the best and most promising boys to serve as slaves and loyal subjects. This "recruitment" was called the *devşirme* (literally, collection). Candidates between the ages of 8 and 15 were selected and sent to Istanbul, where they were converted to Islam and educated in the palace school. The finest of the *devşirme* were chosen for continued education and placement in high palace positions, while the majority of the trainees entered into the elite military corps of Janissaries. By 1700 the Janissaries (*yeniçeri;* literally "new troops") had swelled to over 100,000 from 12,000 during the reign of Mehmet the Conqueror, ultimately becoming more powerful than the government they served and inciting frequent rebellions.

The Turkish aristocracy, comprised of Muslims, Turks, Arabs, and Iranians, shared the rank of *askerî,* with the newer *devşirme* class of Christian converts making up the ruling class.

THE OTTOMAN DECLINE

Several factors, both foreign and domestic, contributed to the progressive deterioration of the Ottoman Empire over the subsequent 2½ centuries. Although Süleyman left a legacy of territories on three continents, he also left behind a scheming widow—Roxelana, the Circassian-born concubine he took as his wife and trusted advisor. Roxelana manipulated her husband, his sons, and the court with sometimes fatal results. She orchestrated events culminating in the murder of Süleyman's

favorite sons, Mustafa and Beyazıt, thus clearing the path of ascension for her utterly incompetent son, Selim II. Nicknamed Selim the Sot, he preferred the pursuits of physical pleasure to governing the empire.

The later abandonment of the traditional practice of fratricide contributed to the weakening of the system as well. Rather than kill off all potential heirs and risk the endangerment of the line, sultans, beginning with Mehmet III in 1595, adopted the practice of imprisoning their sons and heirs. Isolated from daily life and inexperienced in the ways of the government or military, they either went crazy or emerged completely unprepared for the demands of leadership.

Meanwhile, with the abandonment of the policy of celibacy in the Janissary Corps, sons of Janissaries—who were born free Muslims—began to enroll. By the mid–17th century the Janissary Corps had grown to 200,000, squeezing the state for the payroll to support the increase in numbers. The purchasing of office also undermined the merit system, and although the palace school continued to function, the *devşirme* was abandoned. During times of peace, the corps got restless and turned to corruption and mischief. Sultans, beginning with Osman II in 1622, recognized the threat of a too-powerful military, and made sometimes failed attempts at reining them in. Eventually, the internal deterioration of the Corps was inevitable, as was the weakening of Ottoman military might.

With the government decentralized, corrupt, and morally hollow, the Ottomans were unable to deal effectively with internal or external threats or to absorb the economic pressures of a Europe in Renaissance. Vasco da Gama's circumnavigation of Africa opened up new sea trade routes to the east; thus merchants no longer paid levies for passage through Ottoman territory. Meanwhile, a Western Industrial Revolution produced cheaper goods that flooded the Ottoman market. Silver and gold mined in the Americas drove up prices, the cost of living rose, and peasants abandoned their villages, which had disastrous effects on agricultural production.

The gradual decline was arrested later that century with the reign of **Murat IV** and his grand vizier, **Köprülü.** With them the *gazi* spirit was reignited, inspiring decades of new campaigns toward further expansion. Köprülü was so effective that the position of grand vizier was handed down to his son and his grandson, Kara Mustafa; this was the first dynasty associated with the post.

The 18th century was, for the most part, characterized by wars with Austria and Russia, who were pushing into Muslim territory in an attempt to become a Black Sea power. The desire for territorial and economic dominance, along with the trafficking of loyalties, would characterize the Russian–Turkish conflict well into the 20th century.

REFORM ATTEMPTS

It was obvious to Selim III that reform was needed. Inspired by the American and French revolutions, he created a new corps, the *nizam-i jedid* ("the new order"), on Western models, even adopting European-style uniforms. The Janissaries revolted against what they saw as a loss of power and privilege, and in a conciliatory gesture that cost him the throne, Selim dissolved the *nizam-i jedid* in 1807. In the next few years, the Janissaries executed many of the reformers as well as Selim's successor, Mustafa IV; **Mahmud II** was spared only because he was the sole surviving Ottoman prince. Proceeding with caution, Mahmud's first action was to deal with the anarchy that had taken root in the provinces, but as nationalist uprisings in Serbia, Greece, Algeria, and Romania saw the empire eroding at its borders, it was clear that the Janissaries were of little use in the defense of the empire. This

allowed Mahmud to gain enough support to finally have the corps destroyed.

Finally rid of the Janissaries' influence, Mahmud II, followed by his successor, **Abdülmecid,** was able to embark on significant modernization that would last for 40 years. The period of **Tanzimat** (literally, "reordering") was ushered in, aimed at strengthening the power of the government while encouraging an economic and social structure similar to that of Europe.

Influential during this period was the arrival of telegraph lines into Istanbul in 1855, facilitating a literary renaissance that would develop into an incubator for new (dissident) nationalistic ideas. Supporters of this radical approach were called "New Ottomans," whose objectives of preserving territory and limiting autocratic rule would be attainable through the adoption of a constitution. The reforms, however, failed to alleviate a worsening financial crisis brought on by a flood of foreign products, ending in a Franco-English monopoly on tobacco, salt, alcohol, silk, and other essentials. Loans to foreign banks were bankrupting the empire to the point where it was known derisively as "the Sick Man of Europe." The empire was demoralized, having gone from imperial power to political pawn in less than 300 years.

Abdülhamid II succeeded in temporarily reinvigorating the failing empire, but it was too little too late. In 1875 he was confronted with a rebellion by a Russian-backed Pan-Slavic movement in the Balkans. Battered and driven back almost to Istanbul, the Ottomans were forced to sign the disastrous **Treaty of San Stefano,** in which much of the Ottomans' European territory was lost. The Ottoman territorial hemorrhaging continued: Tunisia was lost to the French in 1881, Egypt to the British in 1882, and East Rumalia to Bulgaria in 1885.

In an attempt to create a sense of solidarity among the disparate and budding nationalist groups around the empire, Abdülhamid II turned to Islam. But the tidal wave of nationalism was relentless. Succumbing to external and internal pressures, he reluctantly instituted the first written constitution establishing a parliamentary system modeled on those in the West. For the first time in the history of the empire, absolute Ottoman rule had been relinquished, but as a condition to accepting the document, Abdülhamid insisted on retaining the right as final arbiter on unresolved issues. When the opposition became too outspoken in 1877, he simply neglected to reconvene the parliament and ruled autocratically and in an almost constant state of paranoia for the next 30 years.

In the late 1880s a movement called the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP), made up primarily of military officers and rebels in Macedonia, was organized in the name of "Liberty, Justice, Equality, and Fraternity." These **Young Turks,** led by a triumvirate dominated by **Enver Paşa,** orchestrated a successful nonviolent coup d'état in 1908 designed to reinstate the constitution. Abdülhamid was deposed and his brother **Mehmed V** was released from prison as token head of state.

WORLD WAR I

Although the Turks favored neutrality in the conflict germinating between the Central Powers of Germany and Austria and the allied countries of England, France, and Russia, Enver Paşa, who declared himself war minister in 1914, favored cooperation with the Germans.

In the summer of 1914, Enver Paşa signed a secret peace treaty with the Germans promising naval assistance in the face of Russian aggression in the Black Sea. Two months later, the Ottoman Empire was dragged into a war. With the Arab revolts in the east and the Russians on the northern border, the Turks were surrounded

by hostile forces. Atatürk's legendary defense of Gallipoli in 1915 succeeded in saving the Straits, and therefore Istanbul, from invasion. But Turkish forces were no match for Allied tanks, automatic weapons, and airplanes; and on October 30, 1918, the Turks, represented by the CUP government, agreed to an armistice with England and France.

The Treaty of Sèvres was signed on August 20, 1920, by the government of **Mehmet VI.** Under the treaty, the Ottomans relinquished all European territories except for a small area around Istanbul. Armenia and Kurdistan gained autonomy, Greece was assigned the administration of the region around Izmir, and French and Italian troops were left to occupy portions of the rest of Anatolia. Control of Turkish finances was taken over by the Allies. But the treaty was to be short-lived.

TURKISH STATEHOOD

Spurred on by defeat and foreign occupation, nationalists established pockets of resistance called "Defense of Rights" groups. **Atatürk,** who was already an active nationalist having taken part in the CUP overthrow of 1909, began organizing various nationalist factions, with the twin goals of recognition of a national movement and the liberation of Anatolia from foreign occupation.

In the fall of 1919, when the Greek army got land greedy, arriving as far as the Sakarya River (about 81km/50 miles west of Ankara), Turkish troops led by **Ismet Paşa** (General) beat them back to Izmir; and in several decisive victories, Atatürk succeeded in driving the Greek troops completely off the peninsula. This last victory in the war for independence earned Kemal recognition by foreign governments as de facto leader of the Turks. The Soviet Union was the first power to sign a treaty with the nationalists in 1920, establishing set boundaries between the two countries. France and Britain soon followed suit. Kemal had succeeded in retaking possession of Istanbul, the Straits, and Thrace, and the Treaty of Sèvres was essentially null and void. In a bold move that was to be the beginning of the Turkish Republic, Atatürk declared the sultanate abolished and sent Ismet Paşa as sole representative of Turkey in the drafting of the **Treaty of Lausanne.** Sultan Mehmet VI was allegedly smuggled to Malta on a British ship where he remained in exile, putting the final nail in the coffin of the Sick Man and ending 6 centuries of an empire. The role of caliph was given to his cousin Abdülmecid, heir to a defunct Ottoman dynasty.

Success at Lausanne was immediately followed by the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey and the election of Atatürk as president.

WORLD WAR II THROUGH THE COLD WAR

The Soviet Union's relentless lust for unfettered access to the Bosphorus Straits made it a continuous threat to Turkish national security, while Hitler's appetite for the Balkans boded badly for Turkey as well. Still, Turkey managed to maintain its neutrality at least until February 1945, when a declaration of war on Germany became a prerequisite for admittance into the San Francisco Conference (the precursor to the United Nations, of which Turkey was one of the original 51 members).

Nevertheless, war took its toll on the Turkish economy while pressure mounted over the state's increasingly authoritarian rule. Responding to spreading dissension, then-President Inönü yielded to his critics and authorized multiparty activity. By the election of May 1950, the Democratic Party had attracted enough of the displaced minorities to win a sweeping majority, appealing to private business owners, Islamic reactionaries, and the struggling rural population. In a move to appease their Islamic supporters, the

Democratic Party approved the reinstatement of religious instruction as an optional educational program and reversed Atatürk's decree requiring Turkish as the language of the call to prayer.

Despite a brief period of progress in the early 1950s, Turkey's economy took a nose dive. To finance its poorly managed reforms, the government was forced to take out foreign loans, and Turks began seeking employment beyond their borders. Meanwhile, in a move to return to a one-party system, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes began undermining opposition by banning political meetings, invoking censorship, and creating a special Democratic Party to "investigate political activity," a sufficiently vague mandate for random arrests. Although Menderes maintained a high degree of popularity, the military elite and the foreign-educated intelligentsia began to sow the seeds of rebellion. In response, Menderes imposed martial law. Within a week, students were demonstrating in the streets and cadets from the military academy were staging protests. On May 27, 1960, in a nonviolent coup d'état, the armed forces—as self-appointed guardian of Atatürk's Republican legacy—arrested both the president and Prime Minister Menderes. Menderes was hanged on charges of treason, along with hundreds of members of the Democratic Party (DP). The Committee of National Unity, composed of high-level military officials who had participated in the coup, dissolved the Democratic Party government and took over. President Inönü, 37 years after his first appointment as prime minister, assumed the position again, along with the task of creating a new constitution and constructing the Second Republic. A year and a half later, the military handed over control of the state to civilian rule but maintained a watchful eye on the government in the ensuing years.

In spite of the new structure, confidence in the system plummeted, as did the value of the Turkish lira, resulting in unemployment, poverty, hunger, and ultimately social repression. The situation deteriorated so much that in 1971, in what became known as the "coup by memorandum," Süleyman Demirel was forced by the military to resign from his position as prime minister.

The 1970s were a reactionary time in Turkey, much as the 1960s were in the United States, with Marxist and Leninist doctrines clogging impressionable minds. It wasn't long before antigovernment organizations turned to violence in order to further their cause. The left-wing Turkish People's Liberation Army resorted to political assassinations, kidnappings, and fantastic bank robberies, while the Grey Wolves, the terrorist arm of the Islamic-minded National Salvation Party, made standing in an Istanbul bus line a potentially fatal activity. By mid-1979 the death toll attributed to terrorist violence had reached 20 a day. The military again stepped in. Led by army Chief of Staff General Kenan Evren, the military was greeted with relief by the general population as well as by concerned members of NATO. Two years later, just as they did after previous coups, the military restored civilian government.

THE TURN OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Although Turkey has been vigilant in guarding its secularism, it has not been without a constant struggle. An increasingly corrupt government was bound to provoke resistance, and a return to traditionalism gave credibility to Islamic activity. Educational and welfare programs made possible through endowments from Saudi Arabia gave rise to religious fanaticism, reinforced in the wake of the 1979 revolution in Iran. By 1995, with pro-Islamic sentiment on the rise, the Islamic partisans, having formed the Welfare Party, had gained enough votes in the

parliamentary elections to get their leader, Necmettin Erbakan, appointed to serve alternating years as prime minister with the current, majority party prime minister.

Erbakan's participation as the first Islamic leader in the history of the Turkish Republic was an outright affront to the 1982 constitution's prohibiting of "even partially basing the fundamental, social, economic, political, and legal order of the state on religious tenets." Erbakan was widely criticized and was later forced to resign while the Welfare Party was accused of being antisecular and banned in 1998. The Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partısı or AKP in Turkish), formed in August 2001, took over where the Welfare Party left off, claiming a new, moderate stance and a willingness to work within the secular system. The AKP was propelled into power in 2002 with more than 34% of the vote, in no small part as a result of the ineptitude of the government in power to handle the 1999 earthquake, which claimed the lives of over 20,000. The vote was also seen as a backlash against institutional corruption as well as dissatisfaction with the crumbling Turkish economy. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the former mayor of Istanbul, has been at the helm since 2003, and at least for the earlier years, Turks have been more than satisfied with his performance. In 2004, the AKP received an unprecedented 44% of the vote. But that spread took a hit with the loss of representation in the local elections of March 2009, so the longevity of the AKP remains to be seen.

3 ETIQUETTE & CUSTOMS

APPROPRIATE A TTIRE In Istanbul, especially in the more modern neighborhoods, female dress is modern, even racy, but when visiting the more traditional neighborhoods in and around the Old City, modesty will at least broadcast a different message to those likely to leer. Male visitors might want to be aware that Turkish men simply don't wear shorts, no matter how hot it gets, so wearing Bermudas or cutoffs will at the very least brand you as a foreigner. Meanwhile, coverage for men and women entering a mosque is naturally more conservative: for women, shoulders, legs, and head must be covered, and men should be sensitive to any skin exposed by shorts or tank tops. It's a nice idea to carry around a scarf, but all mosques provide some type of head covering at the entrance. Also, remember that shoes must come off before entering the mosque.

CLEANLINESS Turks were among the first civilizations to provide water as a public service, illustrating at a basic level how clean this culture is. Even restaurants and hotels will boast of themselves and their kitchens as being *hijyenik* (hygienic). Public water fountains can be found around town as well as in the entry courtyards to mosques (these are the ablution fountains). Hand washing is a serial activity in Turkey, and where water is scarce, most carry moist towelettes. After meals, it is customary to proffer the open palms of your hands to your waiter when he passes by with a small dispenser of cologne.

GESTURES Turks are zealous hand shakers, so be prepared for enthusiastic greetings. Remember to proffer the right hand only, as the left hand is considered unclean. Responses to certain questions take some getting used to: Instead of shaking their heads in our familiar "no" gesture, Turks tip their heads slightly backward, raise their eyebrows, and sometimes accompany this gesture with a "tsk" sound. When answering a question posed in the negative, as in, "The Grand Bazaar isn't open today?" the Turkish response will be "yes" in confirmation that you are

correct. Certain hand gestures that would almost never be performed by a non-Turk are considered rude. For example, two gestures have sexual connotations. The first is a closed fist with the thumb protruding between the pointer and middle fingers. The second is slapping a closed fist. Now, forget I told you this.

GIFTS If you've been invited as a guest to someone's home, it goes without saying that you mustn't show up empty-handed. Some nice chocolates are a good option (choose ones that are alcohol free if you don't know how religiously observant the family is), or you can bring flowers. If you've been invited to a restaurant, it's always good form to offer to pay (although no matter how forcefully you try, you'll lose).

AVOIDING OFFENSE The adage that "sticks and stones may break your bones, but names will never hurt you" has no parallel in Turkey, because in this culture, words *hurt.* Sarcasm can be easily misinterpreted, meaning that you could insult someone without even realizing it. Topics that are generally sensitive include human rights, the Kurdish issue, the Armenian question, and anything to do with the movie *Midnight Express.* At the same time, Turkish people are quite interested and open to discussing these things, so just be sure to find a balance. Also, when seated (usually on the floor), pointing the sole of your foot at another person is considered an insult. When bargaining for anything, once you've agreed on a final price and shaken hands, the deal is done. Changing your mind at the last minute or reneging on the deal is the surest way to piss off your carpet salesman (or other merchant); but in my opinion, all's fair in love, war, and commerce, particularly in Istanbul.

PHOTOGRAPHY In some places, photographing state buildings or military and police installations is forbidden. Taking video or photographs in a museum is often prohibited (a picture of a camera with an "X" through it will be posted around the building); where photography is permitted in museums, there is customarily an additional fee to be paid when purchasing your admission ticket. Also, it is generally advisable to get a subject's permission before photographing them. As a rule, women in *chadors* (the head-to-toe black robe) do not wish to be photographed under any circumstances.

4 ARCHITECTURE, ART & MUSIC

First impressions of Turkey reveal a society much more European than one expects, but echoes of a strong, proud, and decidedly oriental heritage shine through in the arts, culture, music, and folklore. Turkish culture developed by absorbing the artistic traditions of conquered lands, so more than any one defining style, the Turkish arts are characterized by layers and layers of complexity. From the time the Turkish tribes spread through Anatolia in the 11th century until the end of the Ottoman Empire, the Turks had incorporated decorative and architectural styles from the Sassanids (a pre-Islamic Persian dynasty), the Romans, the early Christians, the Byzantines, and Renaissance-era Europeans.

ARCHITECTURE

The architectural and decorative arts of Turkey are closely linked to the Islamic faith, which gave major importance to mosques, *medreses* (theological schools), and mausoleums. Almost all mosques follow the plan of Mohammed's house, which was composed of an enclosed courtyard surrounded by huts, with a building at one end for prayer and an arcade to provide shade. Whereas in Mohammed's time the call to prayer was sung from the rooftops, minarets were added later for convenience and style.

The main objective reflected in Selçuk architecture was the proliferation of the purist Sunni orthodoxy, which was achieved by concentrating its efforts on the construction of *medreses* and other public works such as mosques and baths. To provide a means of safe passage for trade as well as the means for communication from one end of the empire to another, the Selçuks built a network of fortified caravansarays. Although Rum Selçuk architecture at first reflected the influences of the Iranian Selçuks, over time they developed a distinct style, incorporating features like pointed arches from the Crusaders and lofty arched spaces from Christian Armenians and Syrians employed under the sultan. They also developed the squinch, a triangular architectural device that allowed the placement of a circular dome atop a square base, laying the groundwork for what was later to become an outstanding feature of Ottoman mosque architecture. The Selçuks also combined traditional Arabesque styles with indigenous Anatolian decorative motifs that literally flowered into a unique style of geometric architectural ornamentation.

A defining feature of Ottoman architecture became the dome, a form that expanded on earlier Turkish architecture but was later haunted by the feat of superior engineering accomplished in the soaring dome of the Ayasofya. As the Turks conquered Christian lands, and churches were converted into mosques, traditionally Byzantine ideas were crossing cultural barriers and finding their way into the Selçuk and Ottoman vocabulary.

Ottoman architecture reached its zenith in the 16th century under Süleyman the Magnificent, in the expert hands of his master builder, Sinan. In the service of the sultan, Sinan built no fewer than 355 buildings and complexes throughout the empire, including the Süleymaniye, whose grand and cascading series of domes has become not only a defining feature of the Istanbul skyline but also a pinnacle in Ottoman architecture. (Sinan succeeded in surpassing the Ayasofya with the Selimiye in Edirne, a destination not covered in this guide.)

Although Ottoman architecture is primarily defined through monumental works and along a historical continuum, certain aspects of domestic architecture developed over time that gave the Ottoman house a number of distinctive features. Early Ottoman houses were timber and wood frame construction. Later, 15th- and 16th-century buildings used masonry or brick infill, lending the houses a decidedly Teutonic feel. The most recognizable (and enchanting) characteristic is the protruding enclosed veranda, called a *çumba,* often with bowed windows.

In certain towns, in unusually large structures or among the upper classes, the Ottoman house followed the oriental model of separating the private quarters (for the women) from the administrative rooms (in a home, this would have been where the head of the household greeted male guests, men and women always being kept separate). But this was more the exception than the rule, and Ottoman houses were owned and inhabited by the entire cross section of cultures and religions represented by citizens of the Ottoman Empire.

ART

Whereas Byzantine art featured elaborate religious interiors and the use of luxury materials like gold and silver, Islamic *hadith* frowned on the use of luxury items in its mosques, favoring instead unpretentious items like ceramics, woodcarvings, and inlay. Additionally, because of the Islamic prohibition against the representation of religious images of living creatures, Turkish decorative arts were channeled

into alternative features like flowers, geometric forms, and Arabic script.

The Selçuks introduced the use of glazed bricks and tiles in the decoration of their mosques, and by the 16th century, the Ottomans had developed important centers of ceramic production at Iznik and Kütahya. Ottoman tiles incorporated a new style of foliage motifs and used turquoises, blues, greens, and whites as the dominant colors. Spectacular uses of tile can be seen all over the country, in mosques, palaces, *hamams* (Turkish baths), and even private homes.

Woodworking and mother-of-pearl or ivory inlay were primarily used in the decoration of the *minbar* (pulpit), but this craft extended to the creation of Koran holders, cradles, royal thrones, and even musical instruments.

Calligraphy is intimately related to the Islamic faith and dates back to the earliest surviving Koran manuscripts. Over the centuries, different styles of calligraphy emerged, with one of the basic requirements being that the text is legible. The Selçuk period brought about a more cursive graceful script, while the earlier Arabic script was more suited to stone carving. The ornamentation of holy manuscripts became an art in itself, as seen in pages that are gilded with gold leaf or sprinkled with gold dust, and in script with diacritical marks accented with red ink.

Besides the use of calligraphy in religious manuscripts, under the Ottomans the application of an imperial seal or *tuğra* (pronounced *too*-rah) on all official edicts became customary. The earliest example of a *tuğra* can be traced back to Orhan Gazi on a 1324 endowment deed, with each successive sultan creating his own distinct and personal representation. Today these seals are significant works of art, bearing price tags that stretch into the hundred- or even thousand-dollar ranges.

The art of marbled paper is another traditional Anatolian art that flourished under the Ottomans. Known as *ebru,* the art of marbling calls for natural dyes and materials, and a precise hand to create a collection of spectacular, one-of-a-kind designs.

Carpet weaving has a complex heritage that goes back for thousands and thousands of years. Based on the necessity of a nomadic existence, carpets had more practical functions: warmth and cleanliness. As tribes migrated and integrated, designs and symbols crossed over borders as well. Carpet designs parallel those of the other artistic mediums, with geometric patterns a common feature of the 13th century.

Wool carpets provided warmth for the harsh winters, while *kilims,* also placed on the ground, provided coverings for cushions in a *şark*-style (Oriental-style) setting that could later be used to transport the contents of the tent. Prayer rugs, identifiable by a deliberate lack of symmetry (the "arrow" will always be lain in the direction of Mecca), continue to be one of the more beautiful categories of traditional Turkish rugs.

Although Turkish carpets became one of the more coveted trappings of status in Europe, appearing in the backgrounds of many a Renaissance artist such as Giovanni Bellini and Ghirlandaio, the more ornate and sophisticated designs preferred by Europeans were the creation of non-Turkic (mostly Armenian) craftsmen. Today, however, even these stunning pieces are part of the traditional Turkish carpet-weaving lexicon.

MUSIC

Turkish music blends a wide range of styles and cultures, from Anatolian troubadours on horseback to the commercially successful tunes of arabesque at the top of the charts. Different combinations of styles and genres have given rise to countless

new sounds. For example, an irregular meter called *akşak,* typical to Turkish folk music that originated on the Asian steppes, may sound unfamiliar to a Western ear trained on the regular cadences of double, triple, and 4/4 time. This style was kept alive by lovelorn troubadours singing the poetic and humanistic words of folk icons like Yunus Emre or Pir Sultan; only recently was the music written down. Folk music endures in the rural villages of Turkey and is a regular feature at wedding celebrations, circumcision ceremonies, and as part of the *canlı muzik* (live music) lineup at a traditional *Türkü Evi*.

Classical Turkish music began as the music of the Ottoman court, and in an empire composed of a patchwork of cultures, the top composers were Greeks, Armenians, and Jews. Turkish classical music has its origins in the Persian and Arabic traditions, and eventually the music of the Mevlevi became a major source as well.

Military music had an important role in the successes of the Ottoman Empire, with its thunderous use of percussion aimed at demoralizing an enemy before battle. The Janissary band influenced 18th- and 19th-century European music, in *alla turca* movements written by Mozart and Beethoven, and operas written by Lully and Handel.

The "Europeanization" of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century brought many foreign musicians to the court, including Giuseppe Donizetti, brother of the more famous Gaetano Donizetti, who was given the position of head of the Imperial Band in 1831.

Pop music took hold of Turkey in the 1950s and 1960s, much as it swept the Western world. But pop in Turkey took on a different form, first with the popularity of the tango in the 1950s, and then with the re-recording of Western favorites using Turkish lyrics. It wasn't long before Turkish musicians began composing their own forms of pop. In the 1970s, as the rural population began to migrate to the cities in search of their fortunes, a widely disparaged form of music called *arabesque* swept the nation off its feet, with the sounds of unrequited love, sentimentality, and even fatalism. Arabesque was a fusion of the new pop, folk, and traditional music that developed into a new and highly commercial style; today, these both exotic and catchy phrases blare from every taxicab, long-distance bus, and disco.

5 AN OVERVIEW OF ISLAM

Islam dates to the beginning of the 7th century A.D. in the city of Mecca, in today's Saudi Arabia. At the time, Mecca contained what was believed to be the first holy shrine built by Adam and Eve. Later, after Abraham was spared the task of sacrificing his only son (Ismael, according to Islamic tradition), he rebuilt a temple on the same spot and dedicated it to the One True God. This shrine, constructed in the shape of a simple cube (hence the word *Kaaba,* from the Arabic word *muka'ab,* or cube), attracted the devotion of a host of pagan cults and, by the end of the second half of the first millennium, contained over 360 types of statuettes and cult objects. Pilgrims representing a broad range of cults flocked to the city, and the wealthy and influential members of the community were delighted with the revenue that these pilgrimages brought.

Mohammed was born in Mecca around A.D. 570 (or CE, for "Common Era") and grew up in a monotheistic family tradition. According to tradition, one day the angel Gabriel appeared with a message from God, a revelation that is accepted as the first verse of the Koran (*Koran* means

"The Recitation"). The Koran forms the foundation of the Islamic faith and is believed by Muslims to be the direct word of God.

In a world of inequality, poverty, and misery, Mohammed's preachings of purity of heart, charity, humility, and justice gained a devoted following well beyond the borders of Mecca. The tribesmen of Mecca, perfectly content with the economic benefits of the status quo, grew alarmed and hostile at these developments, eventually forcing Mohammed and his followers to leave Mecca in fear for their lives. The town of Yathrib welcomed Mohammed and gave him an honored position as leader, changing its name to Madinat al-Nabi or "the town of the Prophet." The town was later to become known simply as Medina.

The basic principles of Islam have roots in a very practical approach to life. The act of prayer sets aside specific time for the recognition of a greater power, and the act of physical prostration is a constant reminder of one's humility and man's equality. Practically speaking, regular prayer develops a sense of peace and tranquillity, and of punctuality, obedience, and gratitude. Furthermore, the setting aside of 5 minutes five times a day for introspection and meditation is proven to have positive effects on one's overall health. The month of ritual fasting, or Ramadan (*Ramazan* in Turkish), reinforces principles of discipline and teaches people to appreciate what they have and to understand what it's like to do without. Ramadan also brings families and communities together in a feeling of brotherhood and unity.

Islam is a socially conscious religion that attends not only to inner growth but to external affairs as well. The concept of charity is implicit in Islam, which calls for a specific contribution to be made to those less fortunate (2.5%) unless doing so would cause undue hardship to the giver.

Sadly, people tend to dwell on the concepts of polygamy, unequal treatment of women, and terrorist activity associated with the Islamic idea of *jihad*. These concepts, when examined in historical context, have pure motives that have been manipulated through the ages to further the self-interest (or vision) of individuals. For example, the idea of multiple wives gained ground at a time when wars were creating an abundance of widows whose only alternative for survival would have been prostitution; the humanitarian solution at the time was for a man to provide a home for as many wives as he could afford.

A divisive issue in Islam dates back to the death of Mohammed and relates to the succession, an area of disagreement that spreads into ideology. **Shiite** Muslims believe that the true line of *imams* (or spiritual leaders) is one based on genealogy, and that the rightful representatives of Islam descend from Ali, Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law. Shiites believe that part of the imam's inheritance is divine knowledge passed between relatives. **Sunni** Muslims interpret Mohammed's ideology more democratically and acknowledge the line of succession as one based on merit and "the consensus of the community."

While it's true that throughout the history of Islam (and Christianity, and others . . .) religion has been manipulated for political purposes, it's edifying to learn that Islam represents a generosity of spirit, a gentleness of heart, and the practice of good, clean altruistic living.

The Anatolian influences in Turkish culture add some rich traditions and folklore into the mix, the result being that many Turks have found a way to adapt to the contradictions inherent in a changing world.

6 TURKISH CUISINE

FOOD

As nomads, the Turks were limited by what the land offered and by what could be prepared over an open fire, so it's not a stretch to understand how kebaps and *köfte* became the centerpieces of Turkish cooking. Turkish food today concentrates on simple combinations, few ingredients, and fresh produce. Then, with access to vast cupboards stocked with ingredients from the four corners of the empire, the palace chefs developed a more complex Ottoman cuisine. Some Ottoman favorites that have made it to us include *hünkar beğendi* ("the sultan was pleased": cubed beef or lamb on a bed of puréed eggplant or aubergine), *imam bayaldı* ("the priest fainted": eggplant or aubergine halves filled with a sort of ratatouille that Barbara Cartland might have visually likened to a woman's "flower"), and *hanım göbeği* ("lady's navel": a syrupy dessert with a thumbprint in the middle). These have become staples in many run-of-the-mill restaurants, while more elaborate Ottoman cuisine is difficult to come by. Happily, several restaurants in Istanbul have researched the palace archives to restore some of those lost delicacies to the modern table, providing a rare opportunity to sample the artistry and intricate combinations of exotic flavors in the world's first fusion food.

A typical Turkish meal begins with a selection of **mezes,** or appetizers. These often become a meal in themselves, accompanied by an ample serving of *rakı* (see "Drink," below), that when taken together, form a recipe for friendship, laughter, and song. Mezes often include several types of eggplant, called *patlican; ezme,* a fiery hot salad of red peppers; *sigara böregi,* fried cheese "cigars"; and *dolmalar,* anything from peppers or vine leaves stuffed with rice, pine nuts, cumin, and fresh mint.

The dilemma is whether or not to fill up on these delectables or save room for the **kebaps,** a national dish whose stature rivals that of pasta in Italy. While *izgara* means "grilled," the catchall word kebap simply put, means "roasted," and denotes an entire class of meats cooked using various methods. Typical kebaps include lamb *şiş;* spicy *Adana kebap,* a spicy narrow sausage made of ground lamb; *döner kebap,* slices of lamb cooked on a vertical revolving spit; *patlican kebap,* slices of eggplant and lamb grilled on a skewer; and the artery-clogging *Iskender kebap,* layers of *pide* bread, tomatoes, yogurt, and thinly sliced lamb drenched in melted butter. Kebaps are generally preceded (or accompanied) by an air-filled, football-shape bread sprinkled with sesame seeds called *lavaş*. Turks are equally nationalistic over their *köfte,* Turkey's answer to the hamburger: flat or round little meatballs served with slices of tomato and whole green chili peppers.

Though signs for kebap houses may mar the view, Turkish citizens are anything but carnivores, preferring instead to fill up on grains and vegetables. *Saç kavurma* represents a class of casseroles sautéed or roasted in an earthenware dish that, with the help of an ample amount of velvety Turkish olive oil, brings to life the flavors of ingredients like potatoes, zucchini, tomatoes, eggplant, and beef chunks. No self-respecting gourmand should leave Turkey without having had a plate of *manti,* a meat-filled ravioli, or *kreplach* dumpling, adapted to the local palate by adding a garlic-and-yogurt sauce. *Pide* is yet another interpretation of pizza made up of fluffy oven-baked bread topped with a variety of ingredients and sliced in strips. *Lahmacun* is another version of the pizza,

Fun Facts **You'll Never Count Sheep Again**

Bus drivers in Turkey abide by an unwritten rule never to eat *cacık*—a salad of yogurt, cucumber, and garlic, often served as a soup—while on duty. The dish is believed to be a surefire, and natural, cure for insomnia.

only this time the bread is as thin as a crepe and lightly covered with chopped onions, lamb, and tomatoes. A typical "street food" is *gözleme*—a cheese or potato crepe.

Desserts fall into two categories: baklava and milk-based. Baklava, made of thin layers of pastry dough soaked in syrup, is a sugary sweet bomb best enjoyed around teatime, although several varieties are made so light and fluffy that you'll be tempted to top off dinner with a sampling. The milk-based desserts have no eggs or butter and are a guilt-free pick-me-up in the late afternoon hours, although there's no bad time to treat yourself to some creamy *sütlaç* (rice pudding). The sprinkling of pistachio bits is a liberal addition to these and many a Turkish dessert. Sweet comfort food includes the *irmik helva,* a delicious yet simple family tradition of modestly sweet semolina, pine nuts, milk, and butter (okay, I lied about the guilt-free part).

So what's the deal with Turkish delight? Otherwise known as *lokum,* this sweet candy is made of cornstarch, nuts, syrup, and an endless variety of flavorings to form a squishy tidbit whose appeal seems to be more in the gift giving than on its own merit.

DRINK

Rather than the question, "Would you like something to drink?" Turkish hospitality leaps immediately to the "What?" **Tea,** called *çay* (chai) in Turkish, is not so much a national drink as it is a ritual. Boil the water incorrectly and you're in for trouble. Let the tea steep without prior rinsing and you've committed an unforgivable transgression. What's amazing is that so many tea drinkers manage to maintain white teeth. Tea is served extremely hot and strong in tiny, tulip-shaped glasses, accompanied by exactly two sugar cubes. The size of the glass ensures that the tea gets consumed while hot, and before you slurp your final sip, a new hot glass will arrive. If you find Turkish tea a bit strong, especially on an empty stomach, request that it be *"açik,"* or "opened," so that the ratio of water to steeped tea is increased. You can also opt for apple tea or one of any number of other types (linden, sage, and such).

The **coffee** culture (Turkish coffee, not the Starbucks version) is a little less prevalent but no less steeped in tradition. Ottoman clerics believed it to be an intoxicant and consequently had it banned. But the *kahvehane* (coffeehouse) refused to go away, and now the sharing of a cup of Turkish coffee is an excuse to prolong a discussion, plan, negotiate, or just plain relax. Turkish coffee is ground to a fine dust, boiled directly in the correct quantity of water (and sweetener, if so desired), and served as is. Either wait for the grounds to settle or down the thick sludge in one shot.

There are two **national drinks:** *rakı* and *ayran. Rakı* is an alcoholic drink distilled from raisins and then redistilled with aniseed. Even when diluted with water, this "lion's milk" still packs a punch, so drink responsibly!

Ayran is a refreshing beverage made by diluting yogurt with water and adding a pinch of salt. Westerners more accustomed to a sweet-tasting yogurt drink may at first

Fun Facts Caffeined Out

As a result of the Ottomans' second unsuccessful siege on Vienna, many of the army supplies were left behind in the retreat, including sacks and sacks of coffee beans. Believing them to be sacks of animal waste, the Viennese began to burn the sacks, until a more worldly citizen, aware of the market value of the bean, got a whiff and promptly saved the lot. He later opened up the first coffeehouse in Vienna.

be put off by the saltiness of *ayran,* but when mentally prepared, it's impossible to dismiss the advantages of this concoction, especially after a dehydrating afternoon trudging through shadeless, dusty ruins.

Sahlep is a creamy cold weather drink made of a starchy powder (called *sahlep*) derived from ground wild orchid tubers and hot milk, and sweetened with sugar and cinnamon. Unfortunately, the drink's popularity and the endangerment of wild orchids are not unrelated; and not surprisingly, the powder doesn't come cheap. So while you can grab a cup off of a street vendor, the drink will most likely have used cornstarch in place of the *sahlep* powder. Another winter favorite is ***boza,*** a thick fermented whip that uses bulgur as its base.

As for alcohol, don't think that because 98% of Turks are Muslim that nobody's drinking wine with dinner. On the contrary, bars outnumber mosques, figuratively speaking. And creative cocktail concoctions are currently in vogue. Still, the government-instituted sky-high taxes on alcohol certainly add to the pain of the hangover. Beer can cost up to 18TL, while I've actually shelled out close to $27 for a Kir Royale. Local drinks like *rakı* or Efes beer can definitely keep the tab down.

7 RECOMMENDED READING

Turkey Unveiled: A History of Modern Turkey, by Hugh and Nicole Pope, two journalists working for the *Wall Street Journal* and *Le Monde,* gives us insights into the most divisive issues of Turkey today. A more recent analysis of modern problems and trends in Turkey written from a Western insider's point of view is provided by Stephen Kinzer, former Istanbul bureau chief of the *New York Times,* in *Crescent and Star: Turkey Between Two Worlds*.

John Ash approaches the history of the city in *Istanbul: The Imperial City* by casting a lens on the more than 20 pivotal historical events or periods beginning with the pre-classical era through to the present day.

Another great read on the Byzantine empire is *A Short History of Byzantium,* John Julius Norwich's condensed version of a three-volume epic about one of the most enduring empires on Earth.

Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire, by Lord Kinross, has established itself as the definitive guidebook on Turkey during the Ottoman Empire. In thoroughly readable prose, Kinross leads you through history while providing the context for understanding Turkey today.

Constantinople: City of the World's Desire, 1453–1924, by Philip Mansel, provides an accurate and colorful history of the Ottoman Empire while sprinkling

Midnight Express: Fact or Fiction?

The 1978 movie *Midnight Express,* directed by Alan Parker and scripted by Oliver Stone, elicits strong resentment in Turkey for the portrayal of Billy Hayes, who, in spite of a well-publicized crackdown on drug smuggling, took a dumb risk and lost. The movie, which won the director an Oscar, is a hideously graphic (and mostly fictional) account of human rights violations in a Turkish prison. The truth is that the *real* Billy Hayes acknowledges the inaccuracy of many of the scenes in the movie; he was in a low-security prison, and no guard was killed in order for him to escape. Actually, the Turkish government released him.

The name of the movie derives from the midnight train service from Istanbul to Edirne, which, at the time, briefly traveled through Greek territory. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Turkish government reacted to international criticism (particularly from the U.S.) of its harsh sentencing guidelines with a discreet and diplomatic trick. Foreigners convicted of drug-related offenses were divested of their passports and released during appeal. Then they were quietly ushered onto the Midnight Express train, where, once in Greece (and with the complicity of Greek guards on the train), they hopped off the train and were jailed until they could obtain new passports from their consulates. The Turks were thus able to maintain a hard-line stance without jeopardizing diplomatic relations.

the pages with attention-grabbing little morsels of lesser-known trivia.

Jeremy Seal's *A Fez of the Heart: Travels Around Turkey in Search of a Hat* is an excellent travelogue that succeeds in capturing the sights and smells of his destinations while ostensibly on the hunt for the legacy left by the fez.

For Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City* is a (tedious) personal reflection on life growing up in the "melancholy" of an Istanbul in transition. Descriptions of faded apartment buildings, and the tension between tradition and convention are as much a self-portrait as a window into the city at the crossroads of civilization. The book also includes dozens of black-and-white photos of the city, allowing a glimpse of Istanbul before major modern investments in restoration.

For a modern woman's view of what it's like to work, live, and travel in Turkey, pick up the recently compiled and released *Tales from the Expat Harem: Foreign Women in Modern Turkey.* It's a compilation of essays, stories, and travelogues by various non-Turkish women.

3

Planning Your Trip to Istanbul

If thoughts of a slow international economy and ongoing insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq are holding you back, rest assured: Turkey has more than gracefully weathered the storm. The nation's economic growth rivals that of China, while tourism is up, up, up, with no sign of slowing. So in spite of somewhat inflated prices in comparison to previous years (bordering on shocking in Istanbul), Turkey still presents itself as one of the best, safest, *easiest,* and all-around most rewarding destinations in the region. What's more, for the first time in history, visitors will be able to sample the best of Turkey's culinary treats minus the flavor of tobacco, as the smoking ban is in effect as of July 2009.

While planning your trip and consulting this guide, you should know a few things about the nature of travel and tourism in Istanbul and Turkey in general.

It is no surprise to any of us that hotels, restaurants, and museums raise their prices regularly (and in some cases, annually). However, this natural inflation is compounded by Turkey's current popularity as a tourist destination, and indeed the Ministry of Culture and Tourism accordingly recalibrates the entry fees for museums at the start of each tourist season. Thus, sparsely visited museums such as the Askeri Müzesi (Military Museum) charge lesser fees in the hopes of attracting more visitors, while the fees for "must-sees" such as Topkapı Palace and the Ayasofya continue to climb to accommodate what the market will bear. Hotels (some of which are now excluding breakfast from the package) and restaurants (which shamelessly have begun to charge a "cover" for bread and water) are also taking advantage of the increased level of demand. I have tried to balance this unavoidable fact by selecting honest and reliable establishments led by professional businessmen and women, and to weed out the "get-rich-quickers." This in itself is not always possible, as ownership of hotels, restaurants, cafes, and even websites changes and evolves, often without the corresponding name change.

Furthermore, Turkey is undergoing a level of development and renewal that it has not seen in decades. Foreign direct investment, improvements in the tax collection system, an unprecedented commitment to the country's as-of-yet unexcavated cultural goods, and elevated museum entrance fees are being plowed back into the economy, while projects anticipating Istanbul's reign as European Cultural Capital (2010) and Turkey's continued bid for membership in the E.U. have given the entire country a major face-lift. The country is changing at an incredible clip, and unfortunately it's impossible for a biennial guidebook to stay on top of things.

Finally, there is an unavoidable (and inconvenient?) truth to writing up those rare and secret "finds." Once the secret is out, the floodgates open, and the secret becomes a cliché. The lag time varies, but the process is sadly inevitable. Hotels double their rates, carpet shops double or triple their profits, and restaurants start to cut corners. Some of these

establishments ride the coattails of a Frommer's trusted listing for years, proffering outdated guidebooks to "illustrate" the endorsement.

What does this mean for you while you plan and fantasize about your trip? In the end, we do our best and expect that you will do yours. In exchange for our experienced and researched advice, we hope that you will be smart travelers, savvy shoppers, and selective with your praise and criticism, and that you will continue to let us know what you think.

For additional help in planning your trip and for more on-the-ground resources in Istanbul, please see "Fast Facts" on p. 253.

1 WHEN TO GO

After a decade of some ups and mostly downs, Turkey's tourism industry is galloping at a nice clip, thank you very much. Almost 10 international five-star hotel chains opened properties in Istanbul in 2007 alone, and the Hilton group is planning 25 additional hotels in Turkey in the coming years. So basically, if you're looking for a quiet bargain, the window of opportunity has long since passed. For the inconvenience of traveling on full flights, staying in hotels booked to capacity, and paying top dollar for almost everything (except where the dollar sign has changed to the euro or British pound sterling), visitors will be greeted by a city of intriguing contradictions positively overflowing with optimism for a more prosperous future.

Nevertheless, the seasonal ebbs and flows of tourism in Turkey follow some general patterns. The early spring months of April (tulip season!) and May and sometimes late March usher in the anticipated start of spring, when flowers are in bloom and the weather is mild. All of the stars align in June and July, when sunny days are followed by pleasant evenings of wining and dining on rooftops. The city also treats its guests to a full complement of cultural festivals in June and July (see "Istanbul Calendar of Events," below), so it's no wonder that it is during these months that room rates are highest. High season is flanked by May and September, although it's often SRO in September due to the many events that take place during that month (including the Biennial, which lasts through Nov and is scheduled next for 2011). By August, the Mediterranean sun has chased most visitors to the coasts, leaving those with no other choice than the peak of the summer to come to Turkey. Istanbul is still fairly lovely in October, but by November the city takes on a dreary, overcast, and rainy pall well into February more often than not.

Istanbul has seen temperatures ranging from 18° to 40°C (0°–104°F), but it's unlikely that you'll encounter such extremes. Summer lasts roughly from mid-June to mid-September. The city sees a sloshy .7m (27 in.) of rain annually, mostly between October and March. In spite of the cold temperatures that sweep in from the Black Sea in winter, large accumulations of snowfall are a rarity, although light dustings do occur.

Average Daytime Temperature (°C/°F)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temp. (°C)	5	5	7	12	16	21	23	23	20	16	11	7
Temp. (°F)	42	42	46	54	62	70	74	74	69	61	52	46

ISTANBUL CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Islam follows the lunar calendar, which is shorter than the Gregorian calendar by 11 days. The result is that Muslim religious holidays fall on different dates each year.

For an exhaustive list of events beyond those listed here, check http://events.frommers.com, where you'll find a searchable, up-to-the-minute roster of what's happening in cities all over the world.

April

Eastern Orthodox Easter Sunday. If Istanbul was the birthplace of Eastern Orthodox Christianity (simply known as Christianity, in the day), then the Greek Patriarchate of Istanbul represents the bulls-eye for observance of the holiest day in Christendom, Eastern style. Mass is celebrated annually, led by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, with prayers and candlelight. April 24, 2011; April 15, 2012. ✆ **0212/531-9670;** www.ecupatriarchate.org.

International Istanbul Film Festival, Istanbul. This festival lasts 2 weeks, from the last Saturday of March to mid-April, offering movie buffs the rare opportunity to view Turkish movies with English subtitles. For schedules and tickets, contact travel agencies in Istanbul or the festival itself (✆ **0212/334-0700;** www.iksv.org). Early April.

Presidential Cycling Tour, Istanbul. Turkey's Presidential Cycling Tour is an eight-stage, 1,212km (753-mile) version of the Tour de France beginning in Istanbul. After sprinting out of the proverbial gate in Sultanahmet Square, cyclists follow the Old City walls between Yenikapı and Eminönü before ending, to great fanfare, where they started. Second week in April. ✆ **0312/310-9613;** www.presidentialtourofturkey.com.

Tulip Festival, Istanbul. The tulip, widely accepted as having been exported to Holland and cultivated by appreciative Turkish 17th-century society, is celebrated annually in Istanbul. For about 2 weeks in April, city parks and roadside medians flower with a stunning variety of vibrant colors. Best viewing is in Emirgan Park, Yıldız Park, and Gülhane Park.

National Sovereignty and Children's Day, Istanbul and Ankara. This day celebrates the anniversary of the first Grand National Assembly, which met in Ankara in 1920 and was later decreed by Atatürk as Children's Day. The day is marked by parades and processions by schoolchildren. Banks and public offices are closed. April 23.

May

Hıdrellez Festival. An ancient celebration of the arrival of spring feted with traditional spring foods, where wishes are attached to Nahils or "wish trees." The day is marked with ethnic music from the Balkans and culminates with acrobats jumping through fire at midnight. May 5. Ahırkapı Sok. and surrounding streets. www.hidrellez.org.

Youth & Sports Day. Atatürk arrived in Samsun on this day in 1919, which signifies the beginning of the Independence War. Students nationwide participate in athletic games, gymnastic events, and parades. May 19.

Fatih Festivities, Istanbul. This festival commemorates the conquest of Byzantium in 1453 by Sultan Fatih Mehmet with local celebrations. May 29.

June

International Istanbul Music Festival. This world-class festival features big names in classical, opera, and ballet. Past artists have included La Scala Philharmonic, the Royal Concertgebouw

Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan

One of the five obligations required by Islam is the observation of Ramadan (*Ramazan* in Turkish, but the former is more popularly used, even in Turkey), the Muslim holy month of fasting. For 1 full lunar month, Muslims are prohibited during daylight hours from eating, drinking, smoking, or succumbing to sexual thoughts or activity. Instead, they adapt to an altered schedule, rising before daylight for breakfast or *sahur,* the last meal they will have before sundown. The fast is broken at sundown with an early evening meal, or *iftar.* Because of the extended daylight hours in summertime, this 30-day marathon is particularly arduous, but even in the wintertime, the sleep deprivation, hunger, thirst, and nicotine withdrawal are an admirable display of determination.

Ramadan evenings include festivities and fun. In Istanbul the Hippodrome is transformed into a street fair lined with colorful booths selling dried fruit, kebaps, and sweets, and the lawn is carpeted with picnickers. Forget about moving freely around Sultanahmet while this highly atmospheric circus is going on.

There are some small considerations for potential visitors in exchange for all of this cultural overload. Expect a slight alteration in the way people and places operate: Museums and holy sights will be crowded; restaurants that are normally open might be closed; shops that are normally closed might be open; menu items that are normally available might be unavailable due to the general lack in demand, and the traffic preceding the evening meal will slow you down considerably. Also potentially bothersome are the drummers who systematically wander the streets waking Muslims (and everybody else) for *sahur,* or the predawn meal. And no one will offer you tea.

The dates of Ramadan for 2010 are August 11 to September 10; in 2011 the dates are August 1 to August 30.

Orchestra, the Tokyo String Quartet, Itzhak Perlman, Idil Biret, and Burhan Öçal. For schedules and tickets, contact the Istanbul Foundation for Culture & Arts (✆ **0212/293-3133;** www.iksv.org). Mid-June to mid-July.

Kırkpınar Oil Wrestling Tournaments, Edirne and in villages around the country. This revered national sport involves the fittest of Turkish youth and astonishing amounts of olive oil to prevent the opponent from getting a good grip. The event is usually accompanied by a colorful market and fair. Late June to early July.

July

International Jazz Festival, Istanbul. Performances are held at various locations around the city. For schedules, dates, and tickets, contact the Istanbul Foundation for Culture & Arts (✆ **0212/293-3133;** www.iksv.org).

August

Zafer Bayramı (Victory Day). This national holiday commemorates the decisive victory over the invading Greek armies during the War of Independence in 1922. Parades run through the main streets, and if you go soon, you may still brush elbows with some surviving vets. August 30.

Tips Advance Tickets to Cultural Events in Istanbul

Tickets for all of Turkey's main events can be purchased through **Biletix** (✆ **0216/556-9800;** www.biletix.com) and at an ample list of retail outlets and hotel concierge desks. In Istanbul, you can get your tickets at the Divan, Swissôtel, Four Seasons, Ritz-Carlton, Hyatt, Radisson SAS, Marmara, and Marmara Pera hotels. See the website for locations in other major cities.

September

International Istanbul Biennial. The Istanbul Foundation for Culture & Arts (www.iksv.org) puts on this major visual-arts event organized around a current political or philosophical theme. Artists are selected from over 45 countries, whose innovative exhibitions are displayed around town, in clever venues such as 500-year-old warehouses, deconsecrated churches and synagogues, and even commuter ferries. Mid-September to early November 2011.

Şeker Bayramı (or Ramadan Baramı). This is the 3-day celebration punctuating the end of Ramadan. Presents and sweets are given to the children (*şeker* means sugar in Turkish), and the Turkish Delight industry makes a killing. September 9 to September 11, 2010; August 30 to September 1, 2011.

October

Akbank Jazz Festival. This 2-week-long festival brings the blues simultaneously to Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. Now in its 17th season, the festival hosts world-renowned performers in the cities' most atmospheric venues (✆ **0212/252-3500;** www.akbanksanat.com). Last 2 weeks in October.

Cumhuriyet Bayramı (Republic Day). This event celebrates the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Parades, public speeches, and fireworks displays are just a few of the organized events, but individual Turkish families do their own celebrating as well. October 29.

November

Anniversary of Atatürk's Death. Turkey comes to a grinding halt at exactly 9:05am, when the population pays its respects to the father and founder of the Republic. Rather than a moment of silence, the streets and waterways echo with the blare of car horns and foghorns. Atatürk-related activities are planned for the day, such as conferences, speeches, and exhibitions, in addition to a memorial concert at the Atatürk Cultural Center. November 10.

Efes Pilsen Blues Festival. In its 20th year as of 2010, this touring blues extravaganza transports Turks to America's deep South—at least in spirit—by way of performers that in past years have included John Lee Hooker, Bernard Allison, John Primer, Adolphus Bell, and Luther Johnson. Shows are scheduled for Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Bursa, Çanakkale, Kayseri, Denizli, and Konya, in addition to a number of other cities. First week of November through second week of December. ✆ **216/444-3337;** www.efesblues.com.

December

Kurban Bayramı. In the Koranic version of an old favorite, it was Abraham's son Ismael, not Isaac, who was spared the knife. Kurban Bayramı celebrates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, with 4 days of feasting and a death sentence to an alarming number of sheep, the likes of which one only sees around Thanksgiving. In fact, the 4-day

festival of sacrifice is the culmination of the Hajj (holy pilgrimage), and much of the meat is given to the poor. November 16 to November 19, 2010; November 6 to November 9, 2011.

Contemporary Istanbul Art Festival. The *Financial Times* has predicted Istanbul to be the next major emerging market in art, providing momentum to Istanbul as a new art destination. The festival, now in its fifth year, hosts individual artists, international and Turkey-based galleries, and collectors for 4 days in early December. ✆ **0212/244-7171;** www.contemporaryistanbul.com.

2 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

VISAS

Because of the seamless ease of obtaining an entry visa on arrival, there is no need to acquire one prior to departure. The visa windows, where functionaries collect payment (in US$, £, €, or Turkish lira) are prominently located adjacent to the Customs area. Be sure to pay up (and get your visa sticker affixed to your passport) before queuing in the Customs line. An entry visa for Turkey is required for citizens of Australia (US$20 or 15€), Canada (US$60 or 45€), the U.K. (£10), and the U.S. (US$20). All of these visas are valid for 3 months and multiple entries. A valid passport is sufficient for citizens of New Zealand.

The Turkish "consulate online" at **www.e-konsolosluk.net** provides up-to-date, country-specific information and, although completely unnecessary, processing of visas in advance of arrival.

CUSTOMS

The Turkish government has established a list of items that may be brought into the country duty-free. In addition to personal effects, travelers are permitted one video player; one laptop computer; one portable radio/tape player; one pair of binoculars (no night vision allowed); one camera and five rolls of film; one typewriter; personal sporting equipment; necessary medical items; gifts not exceeding $300; spare car parts; and various other relatively improbable items for the average tourist. (A complete list is available through the Turkish Embassy website.) Sharp instruments and weapons may not be brought into the country without special permission (diving and camping knives included). Obviously, the importation, buying, selling, and consumption of marijuana and other narcotics is *strictly* forbidden. You shouldn't need to watch *Midnight Express* to figure that one out (see "*Midnight Express:* Fact or Fiction?" in chapter 2).

What You Can Take Home from Turkey

For valuables purchased during your stay, be prepared to provide receipts or other proof of purchase—particularly for that 4×6-foot prize silk Hereke—to avoid problems with Turkish Customs when you leave and to aid in declarations in your home country. Forget about having your carpet salesman lie on the official Certificate of Origin, because the U.S. immigration police are prepared to consult their little carpet blue book if you try to slip through without paying up. Be aware that the authentic 16th-century porcelain soup tureen that you bought or those authentic ancient coins attached to your new necklace are either fake or unable to make the journey with you; it is illegal to take antiquities or anything of historical value out of

the country. To enforce this, the Turkish government requires that anything dating to the end of the 19th century be authenticated by a museum official before its exportation can even be considered. It is also illegal to carry out tobacco seeds and plants, or hides, skins, or clothing made from wild animals. For items dating prior to the 20th century, permission plus a certificate of authenticity from a museum official is needed. Minerals require special documentation obtainable from the General Directorate of Mining Exploration and Research in Ankara (✆ **0312/287-3430;** www.mta.gov.tr).

For information on what you're allowed to bring home, contact one of the following agencies:

Australian Citizens: Australian Customs Service at ✆ **1300/363-263** or log on to **www.customs.gov.au**.

Canadian Citizens: Canada Border Services Agency (✆ **800/461-9999** in Canada or 204/983-3500; **www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca**).

New Zealand Citizens: New Zealand Customs, the Customhouse, 17–21 Whitmore St., Box 2218, Wellington (✆ **04/473-6099** or 0800/428-786; **www.customs.govt.nz**).

U.K. Citizens: HM Customs & Excise at ✆ **0845/010-9000** (from outside the U.K., 020/8929-0152), or consult their website at **www.hmce.gov.uk**.

U.S. Citizens: U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP), 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20229 (✆ **877/287-8667;** www.cbp.gov).

MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

There are no severe health risks in travel to western Turkey, nor are vaccinations required. Visitors journeying to southeastern Turkey (not covered in this book) may want to consider a prophylactic treatment for malaria, particularly prior to travel near the Syrian border and between the months of May and October when transmission rates are highest. Because of globalization and the increasing ease of physical movement across borders, travelers should also ensure that their and their children's vaccinations are up to date, including measles, the incidence of which has been growing in the U.K., as well as parts of Africa.

3 GETTING THERE & GETTING AROUND

GETTING TO ISTANBUL

By Plane

From North America **Turkish Airlines** (✆ **800/874-8875;** www.turkishairlines.com), **American Airlines** (✆ **800/433-7300;** www.aa.com), and **Delta Airlines** (✆ **800/221-1212;** www.delta.com) offer the only direct nonstop service to Istanbul's Atatürk International Airport (IST) from the United States. Canadians flying to Turkey can fly direct on Turkish Airlines, which instituted flights from Toronto to Istanbul in July 2009. These airlines are just the tip of the iceberg. Most major international airlines flying to Istanbul offer flights from North America either as part of their own network or in partnership with another airline. Choosing one involves a change of planes in the airline's home-country hub, but this slight inconvenience is often accompanied by cheaper, more comparable fares.

From Europe The only nonstop service to Istanbul out of London is provided by **British Airways** (✆ **0845/77-333-77;** www.ba.com) and **Turkish Airlines** (✆ **20/7766-9300** in Turkey; www.turkishairlines.com), which also flies nonstop from Manchester (✆ **161/489-5287**).

Istanbul's second airport, **Sabiha Gökçen Airport,** located on the outskirts

of Istanbul on the Asian side of the Bosphorus, inaugurated a second terminal on October 31, 2009. From here, Turkish Airlines has added the destinations of Amsterdam, Berlin, Cologne, Hanover, London, Moscow, and Stuttgart.

There are also budget and/or charter airline options. **Onur Air,** Şenlikkoy Mah. Çatal Sok. 3, Florya (✆ **0212/663-9176;** www.onurair.com.tr), offers service from several U.K. cities. **Easyjet** (www.easyjet.com) flies direct to Istanbul's Sabiha Gökçen Airport from Luton and Gatwick airports.

From Australia and New Zealand Numerous services connect to Turkey, but the biggest challenge will be selecting your preferred connecting country. The following airlines, in partnership with Turkish Airlines, allow you to make the journey with only one plane change:

British Airways (✆ **1300/767-177** in Australia, or 0800/274-847 in NZ), **Emirates Airlines** (✆ **1300/303-777** in Australia, or 0508 364 728 in NZ; www.emirates.com), **Etihad Airlines** (✆ **1800/998-995;** www.etihadairways.com), **Singapore Airlines** (✆ **612/9350-0100;** www.singaporeair.com), and **Thai Airways** (✆ **1300/651-960;** www.thaiair.com) will get you from Sydney and Brisbane; additionally **Qantas** (✆ **13-13-13** in Australia, or 64-9/357-8900 in NZ; www.qantas.com.au) flies from Brisbane. From Melbourne, single-change flights can be had on Emirates and Etihad airlines.

From Perth, Emirates Airlines flies direct to Istanbul with a stopover in Dubai, while Cathay Pacific flies in partnership with Turkish. Travel from Adelaide, Canberra, and Darwin all require two or more changes of plane.

From New Zealand, **Air New Zealand** (✆ **13-24-76;** www.airnewzealand.com.au) and **Japan Airlines** (✆ **1300-525-287;** www.jal.com) will both get you out of Auckland with a change in Osaka onto a Turkish Airlines flight. From Wellington and Christchurch both require two plane changes.

For the best possible comparisons, visit the popular booking sites www.zuji.com.au, www.bestflights.com.au, and www.airfaresflights.com.au, or the old workhorse www.expedia.com.au.

Getting into Town from the Airport

The majority of international flights arrive to Istanbul's international airport, **Atatürk Hava Limanı. Sabiha Gökçen Airport** is primarily a hub for charter airlines as well as for an increasing number of domestic flights.

Most hotels in Istanbul offer free pickup at the Atatürk International Airport for stays of 3 nights or more. Check with your hotel to see if yours is one of them. Absent this little perk, hotels offer airport transfers for an additional fee of anywhere from 25€ to Sultanahmet and 35€ to Taksim. Because taxi fares into both the Old City and Taksim are still very affordable, I recommend this door-to-door option first over an official hotel transfer. A taxi into Sultanahmet from Atatürk Airport should cost around 18TL and a ride into Taksim around 26TL, depending on traffic.

Getting into town from Sabiha Gökçen Airport, 40km (25 miles) east of Taksim, can be pretty expensive (75€ and up) or infuriatingly convoluted (a combination of two or more of a taxi, bus, ferry, tramway, or funicular ride, depending on the final stop), unless you take the bus (see below).

By Bus: If your destination from Atatürk Airport is around Taksim, the reliable and convenient **Havaş shuttle bus** (✆ **0212/444-0487**) departs every 30 minutes from just outside the international terminal airport exit (10TL; trip time 40 min.). You could also take the cheaper and rarer green municipal **bus no. 97** (2TL), but because Havaş is so convenient and reliable, the public bus is not an

option I recommend. Havaş also runs a shuttle from Sabiha Gökçen Airport to Taksim, with departures scheduled for 25 minutes after the landing of each flight. The ride costs 12TL and takes around an hour.

It's unlikely that guests heading to the deluxe hotels along the Bosphorus will be taking public transportation into town. Nevertheless, Havaş also runs a shuttle from Atatürk Airport to the entrance of Akmerkez at Etiler (10TL; trip time 45 min.), where taxis regularly await passengers.

By Metro/Tramway: If you're on a budget and feeling like going the whole nine yards of independent travel, take advantage of the newly completed train connection between Atatürk Airport (entrance is downstairs next to the international arrivals terminal; 2TL) and the Old City all the way up to Kabataş and Taksim. This service connects the airport to Zeytinburnu, where you will need to transfer aboveground to the tramway into the historic part of the city (stops include Beyazıt, Cağağoğlu, Sultanahmet, Gülhane, Sirkeci, and Eminönü). The tramway continues all the way to Kabataş, with stops at Karaköy, Tophane, and Findikli; from the last stop, a funicular transports passengers up one of Istanbul's steeper hills to Taksim. If you use the Akbil, the whole trip will cost 2TL; otherwise it'll be 2TL per transfer. The trip will take a little over an hour. Remember though, you'll be hot, tired, hungry, and luggage-laden for this convoluted, albeit convenient, journey.

For more information on taking and paying for public transportation, see p. 43.

By Car

With global warming issues and petrol prices in the stratosphere, driving to Turkey makes bad sense. But some people just insist on the comfort of their own vehicle, so be prepared for the red tape of sorting out multiple transit visas and at least 4 days of hard driving. The two traditional routes to take are the "northern" one through Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria; or the "southern" one through Belgium, Germany, Austria, and Italy with a car-ferry connection to Turkey. Drivers planning to stay longer than 3 months must have an **International Driving Permit (IDP),** which also comes in handy in out-of-the-way places where the local police can't decipher your national version. You'll also be required to provide proof of third-party insurance at the Turkish border.

By Train

Depending upon your starting point, train travel from Europe may require a number of connections. Direct trains depart daily from Bucharest and Budapest and take about 27 and 40 hours, respectively. Trains also depart daily to Istanbul from Pythion and Thessaloniki in Greece and from Sofia, Bulgaria. For information on the various connections available, visit www.bahn.de.

Remember that it is your responsibility to obtain visas where required (either transit or tourist, depending on your travel plans) for every border that you will cross.

Sirkeci Station (✆ **0212/527-0050**) has been serving train passengers arriving (and departing) Istanbul from European cities for well over a century and has served as a model for railway stations throughout central Europe. A tram stop is immediately outside the station entrance, but don't rely on this if you're first arriving, as there is no ticket kiosk at this stop.

A new train service now connects Turkey with the Balkans and beyond. **Serbian Railways'** (www.serbianrailways.com) "Bulgaria Special" departs Belgrade for Sofia daily at 8:40am, connecting with a night sleeper train that arrives in Istanbul the following morning at 8:23am. Round-trip tickets cost 88€ and 132€ for second and first class respectively; upgrades to a sleeper car cost 9.40€ and 14€ extra.

Tips We'll Tell You Where to Go

Not sure how to get where you're going? The transport arm of the Istanbul municipality operates a great website, **www.iett.gov.tr**, where you can find all the routes for the whole range of transport options. You can also plug in your starting point to find out which public transport options stop there. Just click on the "How can I GO There?" icon on the bottom right of the main page (English).

By Bus

No longer the hippie trail of 1960s folklore, international bus travel into and out of Istanbul still offers a heavy dose of nostalgia, if not an equal amount of exhaustion and backache. Direct daily service into (and out of) Istanbul's main otogar (www.otogaristanbul.com) is provided by a number of bus companies from cities in Bulgaria, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Romania. The main bus companies are Metro (www.metroturizm.com.tr), Derya Tur (www.deryatur.com.tr), Drina Trans (www.drinatrans.com), Morava (www.morava.net), Öz Varol (www.ozvarolturizm.com), and Vardar Turizm (www.vardarturizm.com.tr), among others.

By Boat

Options for arriving into Istanbul by sea are limited. Serving the Black Sea, **Ukrferry** (www.ukrferry.com) runs a weekly ferry departing Odessa, Ukraine, on Monday; arriving Istanbul on Wednesday. Istanbul's municipal ferry company, **Istanbul Deniz Otobüsleri** (**IDO;** www.ido.com.tr), operates fast ferries and sea buses from Bandırma, Bursa (actually, Güzelyalı), and Yalova (all on the south coast of the Marmara Sea), as well as from the Marmara and Avca islands. All of these ferries arrive into Istanbul's Yenikapı ferry terminal. The privately owned consortium now running the defunct Turkish Maritime Lines—now **Denizline** (✆ **0212/444-3369;** www.denizline.com.tr)—operates two cruise-type ferries (pool, fitness room, disco, kids' club) between Izmir (Alsancak Ferry Terminal) and Istanbul (Sarayburnu docks, adjacent to Eminönü) departing four times per week at 5:30pm, arriving the following morning at 8:30am. For more information on inner-city ferry and sea bus service, see "Getting Around" below.

A number of ferries plying the Mediterranean arrive at ports in Turkey, but then it's up to you to get from the port to Istanbul. **Marmara Lines** (✆ **010/573-1805** in Italy; www.traghettiweb.it) operates service to Çeşme (1 hr. west of Izmir, along Turkey's Aegean) from Ancona and Brindisi, in Italy, between March and November. Also in summer, ferries provide service between **Sochi** (www.seaport-sochi.ru) on the Russian coast of the Black Sea, and Trabzon, in Turkey. You can also take a puddle jumper from the Greek Islands of Chios (to Çeşme), Kos (to Bodrum), and Rhodes (to Bodrum and Marmaris).

GETTING AROUND

By Car

With traffic getting denser and more aggravating on an hourly basis, having a car in Istanbul is the surest method for going nowhere. In the rare event that traffic moves smoothly, do you really think you know where you're going? Can you read signs in Turkish? Do you know what a "Cevreyolu" is? And once you get there, where are you going to park? If you do decide to disregard better judgment and good counsel (and the fact that traffic-related enforcement in general in Turkey has become rather unforgiving, given the

Tips Don't Let Taxi Drivers Take You for a Ride

There is a certain amount of control you give up when entering a taxi in a strange city. Your safest bet is to have your hotel concierge phone for the taxi instead of you flagging it down. (In Istanbul, under no circumstances should you hire a taxi off the street in front of the Ayasofya.) Some hotels and taxi companies have agreements that award the company repeat business in exchange for honesty and accountability at no extra charge to the passenger. Still, the risk that absolute ignorance of a location will be rewarded with a circuitous route is fairly high. A preemptive approach is always good: Get the approximate taxi fare from your hotel before you get in the car. But even once you're seated, there are still a few things to look out for to avoid being scammed.

Check to see that the meter is running. Beware of the "bait-and-switch" routine, whereby the driver takes your 10TL bank note (worth about $8.70 or £3.80) and accuses you of having given him a 1TL note. You can avoid this by holding onto the bank note until you've received your change. Also, note that 1TL notes are blue-toned and 10TL notes are orange.

For longer distances or drives outside of the city limits, taxis usually have a list of set rates. Be sure you've discussed these in advance, as you may be able to negotiate a discount (though it's doubtful). A final word: Don't get into a cab expecting bad things to happen. Just be a smart customer.

potential revenues), or if you're only planning to pick up the car and drive out, here's some basic information:

The major car-rental companies in Istanbul are **Avis** (www.avis.com), **Sixt** (www.e-sixt.com), **Hertz** (www.hertz.com), **National** (www.nationalcar.com), **Budget** (www.budget.com), and **Alamo** (www.alamo.com). All have desks at Atatürk International Airport, as well as at locations in town. Meanwhile, Hertz and **Decar** (www.decar.com.tr) have desks in the international terminal at Sabiha Gökçen Airport, while Avis has one in the domestic terminal. Check your national website for deals; at press time, the price for a manual-transmission compact car was 60TL per day.

By Taxi

Taxis are plentiful in Istanbul and are more likely to hail you than vice versa. **Avoid taxis that congregate around the main tourist spots** such as Topkapı Palace, Ayasofya, and at the cruise-ship landing in Karaköy—these are the ones adept at performing a bait-and-switch with large bank notes or taking meandering routes. Better to have your hotel call a cab for you, the agreement being that the hotel will continue giving the taxi company business only as long as the drivers remain aboveboard (granted, not a fool-proof system). Similarly, when out and about, pop into the nearest hotel and have the receptionist call a taxi for you.

Istanbul taxis no longer have separate rates for daytime and nighttime, a system which saw a 50% increase in fares between midnight and 6am. Instead, the starting rate for a taxi ride has increased from 2TL to 2.50TL. A taxi from Sultanahmet to Taksim will cost between 12TL and 16TL, depending on traffic and distance.

By Public Transportation

Transportation in Istanbul has come a long way since its earlier disjointed days, and improvements are being advanced at a hearty pace. While certainly not a seamless system, the network of buses, minibuses, funiculars, ferries, catamarans, subways, trains, trams, and trolley cars will certainly get you where you're going, but you may have to take all of them to get there. For a quick reference guide to transportation in central Istanbul, see the inside front cover of this book.

The full fare for a one-way ride, without a transfer, on the bus, tramway, historic trolley, funicular to Taksim, metro, and most of the commuter ferry crossings costs 2TL (the Tünel costs 1TL). Unless you purchase a transit pass (see "Transport Made Easy with a Transit Pass," below), you will have to pay the individual fare again each time you transfer lines or modes of transport. For the purpose of consistency, all prices for transportation are listed here at the pay-per-ride fare.

The metro is still a work in progress. The metro line north of Taksim has been extended. The completed Şişhane metro stop will eventually be connected to the massively ambitious Marmaray project, optimistically expected to be completed around 2011. Once complete, the section of the commuter rail between Yenikapi and Sirkeci will close.

The Bus Metropolitan buses in Istanbul are frequent, comprehensive, economical, and easy—*if you know your way around.* While there is no bus map, the destination of an individual bus line is now clearly marked at the bus stop (usually your typical glass shelter with a metal bench). Plaques at the bus stop provide a list of the stops along the route. The bus's final destination is also indicated above the front windshield, with a selection of major stops listed on the side of the bus next to the

Tips Transport Made Easy with a Transit Pass

The entire metropolitan transport system accepts *jetons* (tokens) or one of a number of transit passes currently available. If you rely entirely on the *jetons,* you'll be forced to insert one at every transfer point, whereas use of a transit card gets you discounts for transfers. Currently there are three types of transit cards: the Akbil, the Beşibiryerde, and the Istanbulkart, all with a built-in discount of 10% off the full token (or *jeton*) fare. Until recently, the Akbil (meaning "smart ticket") was the only transit pass offering the convenience and savings of a transit pass to commuters. The Akbil is a prepaid plastic key-chain contraption with a refillable metal "button" that connects with a receptacle in the turnstile to deduct the fare. All transfers are free for travel within a 45-minute period. For an initial deposit of 6TL (keep your receipt so that you can get your deposit back before you leave), you can add money and top it off at will. And better still, one Akbil can be used by multiple travelers in a group. Meanwhile, true to its name, the Beşibiryerde ("five-in-one") is good for five rides. The newer credit card–size Istanbulkart, which operates via radio frequency, was introduced in March 2009 and is designed to eventually replace the Akbil. Both are rechargeable at vending/refilling machines located in all metro stations, at major bus and tramway hubs, and at the ferry docks. Machines accept both Turkish lira and major credit cards.

entrance (admittedly, not much help if you aren't familiar with the basic layout of the city). To help you navigate, we have provided a selection of the more useful bus routes on the inside front cover of this book. You can also do some advance planning via the **IETT** website (www.iett.gov.tr), which has an interactive map and line-stop assistance. Still, always check with the driver before getting on to make sure the bus is going in the direction you need; and once boarded, frequently ask your neighbor when to get off. Some of the most useful major hubs are at Eminönü, Taksim, and Beşiktaş. Tickets are sold at the major hubs or on the bus—if your bus doesn't have a "cashier" on board, there's an informal system whereby you can pay the driver, who will in turn hand you his own personal Akbil to use (this earns the driver about .05TL per cash-paying customer). Buses run, roughly, from 6 or 6:30am until around 11pm or midnight.

The *Dolmuş* *Dolmuş* are yellow minivans that operate like group taxis with set routes. A relatively informal system, *dolmuş* run daily from early morning to early evening. A *dolmuş* will leave its terminus (marked with a blue "D") only when it fills up (the word *dolmuş* means "stuffed") and then pick up and drop off passengers along the route. The main *dolmuş* stands are located in Taksim (at Taksim Caddesi and Tarlabaşı Caddesi, near the flower sellers), Sirkeci, and Aksaray, and connect to points all over the city. *Dolmuş* are often more direct than metropolitan buses and cheaper than taxis, cutting down on time and leaving more money in your pocket. Look for a *dolumuş* with the name of your destination displayed in the window. When boarding, tell the driver your destination and ask how much it will be *(ne kadar?).* For shorter distances, 3TL to 5TL should cover it. The driver will drop you off at your destination, but if you want to get off sooner, say *"inecek var"* (this is my stop) or *"inmek istiyorum, lütfen,"* the short version of "I want to get off" with a "please" stuck on the end.

The Tramway When the tram from Eminönü to Zeytinburnu was built and inaugurated in 1991, the planners had overlooked one very important detail: money collection. Passengers rode for free for 1 year while the system installed booths and printed tickets. The system has grown up quite a bit since then; the city recently extended the tramway from Eminönü all the way to Kabataş (just below Dolmabahçe Palace); there's also an underground funicular that hoists passengers up the hill from Kabataş to Taksim in just 110 seconds for 2TL. A ticket booth at the turnstile entrance dispenses *jetons* or Akbil refills. This collective service cuts trips between Taksim and Sultanahmet to around 15 minutes (with transfers), while destinations in-between (Eminönü, for the Egyptian Spice Bazaar; Çemberlitaş or Beyazıt for the Grand Bazaar; Tophane for the Istanbul Modern) are just a token away. By the time you read this, the tramway will most likely be extended from Kabataş north along the Bosphorus; the plan is to add stations at Dolmabahçe, Beşiktaş, Şişli, and points north and northwest all the way to Mahmutbey. Token *(jeton)* booths are located at the entrance to the turnstiles; Akbils can be purchased/refilled at selected stops, including Sultanahmet, Eminönü, and Taksim, as well as in any metro station. Hours of operation are from 6am until about midnight.

The Historic Trolley Just when you feel your feet are ready to fall off, you hear the jingle of the lifesaving streetcar. The "Nostalgic Tramway" now plies fresh tracks on newly laid cobblestones along Istiklal Caddesi. As with most public-transportation options, you can pay with cash or with the Akbil. The trolley runs daily from 7am to 11pm and makes three intermediary stops at Hüseyn Ağa Camii, at Galatasaray High

School/Flower–Fish Market, and in Beyoğlu at Nutru Sokak (in front of the Turkiye Iş Merkezi).

The Funicular The subway known as Tünel connects the sea-level neighborhood of Karaköy near the Galata Bridge with the lofty neighborhood of Beyoğlu at the southern end of Istiklal Caddesi. Tünel trains run Monday through Saturday from 7am to 9pm and Sunday from 7:30am to 9pm. The cost is 1TL.

A second funicular was completed in 2006, providing a much-needed lift to those down at the docks of Kabataş (near Dolmabahçe Palace) up the very steep hill to Taksim (see "The Tramway," above).

The Metro/Underground Istanbul's modern underground is growing at a fast clip, currently connecting the new Şişhane stop (located beneath Meşrutiyet Caddesi), just steps from Tünel, with (as of this writing) the Atatürk Oto Sanayı, passing through Taksim, Osmanbey (walking distance from Nişantaşı), Şişli/Mecidiyeköy (commercial center), Gayrettepe (even more commerce), Levent (guess what, business plus the Kanyon and Metrocity shopping malls), Sanayı, and Maşlak (Turkey's equivalent of Wall St.). The metro is open from around 6:30am until midnight. You can buy *jetons* at the ticket window outside the turnstile; or, if you're using the Akbil, just plug it into the turnstile receptacle.

The metro extension connecting the airport to town is now complete, providing access at Yeşilköy (just outside the airport; you'll need two *jetons*) to Aksaray via a roundabout route by way of the *otogar* (bus station). If your destination is Sultanahmet, exit the metro at Zeytinburnu, transfer to the tramway (by paying the fare again), and hop on any train marked EMINÖNÜ.

The Ferry & Sea Bus All inner- and intercity sea transport is operated by the **Istanbul Deniz Otobüsleri** (IDO; ✆ **0212/444-4436;** www.ido.com.tr). The IDO fleet includes, in order of increasing speed: conventional ferries (read: slow, both passenger-only and car); the dubiously named "fast" ferries with a speed of 35kmph (22 mph); sea buses (passenger-only catamarans with speeds ranging from 40–53kmph/25–33 mph), and fast catamarans (up to 59kmph/37 mph). Generally speaking, fast ferries serve the southern Marmara Sea ports (see "Getting to Istanbul: By Boat," above). Some of the more useful inner-city connections are on the commuter ferries, shuttling passengers between Kadıköy and Haydarpaşa; Kadıköy and Eminönü; Kadıköy and Kabataş; Kadıköy and Beşiktaş, and on the passenger-only commuter sea buses, which ply the Bosphorus and the Marmara Sea (Yenikapı on the European side, Kadıköy and Bostancı on the Asian side, and the Princes' Islands). Smaller, more scenic boats take a more tourist-friendly leisurely pace up the Bosphorus, and a commuter boat plies the route from Üsküdar, through Karaköy and Eminönü, to Eyüp. Sample fares for public ferries are 1.50TL for the shorter points within Greater Istanbul and 3TL for the slow ferry to the Princes' Islands and are payable via the Akbil or token. Online booking is available for fast ferries and intercity sea bus lines only.

The scenic ferry that takes the time-honored cruise up the Bosphorus leaves from Eminönü, making stops at Beşiktaş (near Dolmabahçe Palace and the Çırağan Palace) on its crisscross pattern up the channel to Kanlıca, Yeniköy, Sariyer, Rumeli Kavağı, and Anadolu Kavağı (13TL one-way or 20TL round-trip; 90 min. each way). The ferry from Eminönü departs daily, year-round, at 10:35am, returning from its final stop at Anadolu Kavağı at 3pm. An additional noon and 1:35pm departure operates from mid-April through November or December with a return departure at 4:15pm (additional return departures on weekdays;

confirm times, as they may change). On Saturday nights from July 1 to mid-August, IDO also operates a moonlit Bosphorus cruise (20TL round-trip) departing Bostancı and making stops in Moda, Eski Kadıköy, Eminönü, Üsküdar, Beşiktaş, Ortaköy, Çengelköy, Rumeli Kavağı, and Anadolu Kavağı. The cruise departs at 6:10pm arriving at Anadolu Kavağı at 8:50pm; the return departure is at 10pm, arriving Bostancı at 12:35am.

If you're interested in traveling by car to cities along the Marmara region (for example, Bursa or Çanakkale), the easiest and quickest way is to take an **IDO** car ferry or sea bus from Yenikapı to Güzelyalı or Mudanya (for Bursa) or Bandırma (for Çanakkale and the Northern Aegean). The trip takes 75 minutes and 1 hour, 45 minutes respectively.

For points farther south (Izmir, Bergama, Kuşadasi, Ephesus/Selçuk, or Bodrum), you may want to cruise with **Denizline** (✆ **0212/444-3369;** www.denizline.com.tr) on the company's overnight ferry from Istanbul to Izmir.

4 MONEY & COSTS

Frommer's lists exact prices in the local currency. The currency conversions quoted above were correct at press time. However, rates fluctuate, so before departing consult a currency-exchange website such as **www.oanda.com/convert/classic** to check up-to-the-minute rates.

On January 1, 2005, the Turkish Central Bank lopped six zeros off a currency that saw phenomenal inflation in the previous decade or so, making the handling of Turkish money even easier. But those were the old days. With a national economic growth rate rivaling that of China's, Turkey's economy is stronger than it's ever been. Meanwhile, those millionaire bank notes of yesteryear, which were replaced with the New Turkish Lira (*yeni turk lirası* or YTL), are now officially no longer new. It's just the plain old (new) **Turkish Lira (TL)**.

Bank notes come in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, and 200TL, while coins, called the kuruş (kr), come in 1, 5, 10, 25, and 50 kuruş pieces. There is also a 1TL coin.

In spite of the continued stabilization of the Turkish Lira, local prices for larger-ticket items (hotels, tours, carpets) are still generally quoted in foreign currency, usually the euro. But wishing to accommodate, local salesmen will often quote a price in your home currency. Similarly, prices listed in this book are given in the currency in which they were provided, creating an unavoidable mishmash of prices in euros, pounds sterling, Turkish Lira, and U.S. dollars. Note that at the time of payment, however, prices are converted back to TL *based on that day's rate of exchange.* This may account for minor discrepancies in, say, the charge on your credit card bill vs. the amount you thought you were going to pay relevant to the price quoted on a hotel's website.

Now a word on value. Ten years ago, Istanbul was the quintessential budget destination. Then, a filling lunch of home-style Anatolian victuals cost $4, a taxi from the airport to Sultanahmet was $5, and the total admission for a visit to Topkapı Palace was $9. Now, appetizers

The Value of the Turkish Lira vs. Other Popular Currencies

TL	US$	Can$	UK£	Euro (€)	Aus$	NZ$
1	0.67	0.70	0.40	0.44	0.72	0.91

What Things Cost in Istanbul	
Taxi from airport to Sultanahmet	22TL
Havaş bus from airport to Taksim	10TL
Double at Çırağan Palace with sea view	670€–1,350€
Double at the Apricot Hotel	79€–99€
Dinner for one at the Four Seasons	75TL
Dinner for one at a *köfte* joint around town	15TL
Bosphorus cruise (round-trip)	20TL
Commuter ferry up the Bosphorus	1.50TL
Ticket on bus, tram, or metro	2TL
Admission to Topkapı Palace (all exhibits)	35TL
Taxi from Sultanahmet to Taksim (no traffic)	10TL
Cappuccino at a European cafe	7TL
Glass of tea at a tea garden	2TL
Glass of tea in a carpet shop	Free

alone start at 6TL, the same taxi ride costs the equivalent of around $15, and the total admission for Topkapı is 35TL. Far and above mere inflation, this increase represents the forces of supply and demand (where demand for Istanbul has skyrocketed) and the exponential expansion of a thriving middle class. Today, you can still have a meal for under $10, but the number of dining establishments with entrees at 30TL, 40TL, 50TL, and up are ever increasing. Put into further perspective, in 2009, while not at the top of the list, Istanbul ranked as the 38th most expensive city in Europe and 74th in the world. (Central London was 37th and 73th, respectively.)

It's always advisable to bring money in a variety of forms on a vacation: a mix of cash, credit cards, and if you insist, traveler's checks. You should also exchange enough petty cash to cover airport incidentals, tipping, and transportation to your hotel; you can easily withdraw money upon arrival at an airport ATM located in the arrivals terminal.

ATMS

For those of you willing to succumb to the endless, creative bank fees charged by credit card companies, ATMs on the Cirrus (✆ **800/424-7787;** www.mastercard.com) and PLUS (✆ **800/843-7587;** www.visa.com) networks are widely available in Istanbul. Among the most reliable of the local banks are **Akbank, Türk Iş Bankası, Garanti Bankası, Yapı Kredi Bankası,** and **Ziraat Bankası.** Ask your bank whether you need a new personal identification number (PIN), as most ATMs in Turkey accept numbered passwords only, and some limit their input to four digits. Also, be aware that the ATMs are often fickle or empty, so always carry around alternatives in the form of cash or traveler's checks for emergencies.

CREDIT CARDS & DEBIT CARDS

Private bank accounts are not the only method where banks have been creative with mining additional fees. Purchases on credit card accounts are now also subject

to a percentage fee, usually around 5%. In an annoying twist, these very same credit cards offer some of the more competitive exchange rates. It's up to you to do the math, though. Nevertheless, it's highly recommended that you travel with at least one major credit card. You must have a credit card to rent a car, and hotels and airlines usually require a credit card imprint as a deposit against expenses. Most establishments accept American Express, MasterCard, and Visa. Debit cards are also a commonly acceptable form of payment in most establishments.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

In Turkey, as in many other European countries, local merchants are loath to accept traveler's checks, as banks charge large fees to cash them out. Banks tend to charge high commissions or hide the commission in higher rates, as do the exchange offices around town. Hotels are most amenable to exchanging your traveler's checks, but hotel exchange rates are notoriously unfavorable. The post office (PTT) will probably be your best bet for exchanging them for cash.

5 HEALTH

STAYING HEALTHY

No particular health concerns are associated with travel to Istanbul. For information and updates on any epidemics or pandemics (such as Avian Influenza or the H1N1), visit the websites of the **World Health Organization** (www.who.int), the **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control** (http://ecdc.europa.eu), or the **United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (www.cdc.gov).

General Availability of Healthcare

Any veteran traveler never leaves home without a basic health kit tailored to his or her particular needs. Generally, these should include diarrheal medicine such as Imodium, aspirin, ibuprofen, sunscreen, insect repellent, and sanitary products. While it is imperative to pack prescriptions that you need (insulin, cholesterol-lowering meds, and others), many are widely available in pharmacies (called *eczane*) in Turkey, sold by the brand name at prices often lower than at home. If you suffer from a chronic illness, consult your doctor before your departure. Pack **prescription medications** in your carry-on luggage, and carry them in their original containers, with pharmacy labels—otherwise they won't make it through airport security.

COMMON AILMENTS

DIETARY RED FLAGS **Food poisoning and diarrhea** are probably the most prevalent illnesses associated with travel to Turkey. Although water from the tap is chlorinated and generally safe to drink, even the locals drink bottled water. Avoid nonpasteurized dairy products and shellfish during the hot summer months, and maintain a healthy suspicion of street vendors. In the event that you become ill, drink plenty of (bottled) water and remember that diarrhea usually dissipates on its own. Pepto Bismol (bismuth subsalicylate) can often prevent symptoms, but if the problem becomes truly inconvenient, pharmacists are generally sympathetic and bilingual, and will be able to provide an effective remedy. (**Ercefuryl** works wonders.)

BUGS, BITES & OTHER WILDLIFE CONCERNS **Rabies** is endemic in parts of Turkey, and joggers have been known to be bitten by infected strays out in the heartland. But this is extremely rare. Best to stay away from animals altogether,

advice that, given the sweet temperaments of the street dogs and cats, I myself am incapable of following. If you're concerned, consult your doctor for pre-exposure immunization.

TROPICAL ILLNESSES Although the persistence and tenacity of Turkish **mosquitoes** might cause you to suffer, it is unlikely that malaria will. Keep in mind that you're more likely to catch deadly mosquito-borne diseases in your own backyard than abroad. If you are experiencing symptoms, seek prompt medical attention while traveling as well as for up to 3 years after your return. Don't forget to pack a proven insect repellent (especially for those nights lounging outdoors in a tea garden or spent on the rooftops of Istanbul).

WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET SICK AWAY FROM HOME

Any local consulate can provide a list of area doctors who speak English. If you do get sick, you may want to ask the concierge at your hotel to recommend a local doctor, even his or her own. This will probably yield a better recommendation than any information number would. In fact, ask anybody on the street and he/she will likely accompany you to the doctor. Also, local doctors advertise their services through discreet signs near their offices, and most speak English. If you can't find a doctor who can help you right away, try the **emergency room** of one of the private hospitals under "Fast Facts: Istanbul," p. 254. Additional **emergency numbers** are also listed in "Fast Facts: Istanbul," p. 254.

6 SAFETY

Newbie Western travelers to Turkey are often plagued by worries over safety: It is a Muslim country, after all, and there is a war going on nearby, right? Well, not actually. While Turkey's population is mostly Muslim, I'm sure I don't need to remind you that all Muslims aren't terrorists, do I? Tsk tsk, if I do. Indeed, I guarantee that one of the first impressions that will overwhelm you upon arriving in Turkey is its complete and utter "normalcy."

Second, there's a war going on, right? Sure, but it's 1,600km (1,000 miles) away as the crow flies. And as we've all so regrettably learned, distance doesn't contain conflict, and the violence in Iraq menaces us all just as much in London, Toronto, and New York as it does in Istanbul.

Okay, but what about the PKK? Sigh. Radicals committed to violence (in this case, right-wing Kurdish nationalists) are attacking Turkish soldiers in the southeast of the country. Infrequently, the violence erupts beyond these borders. In my opinion, such an attack targeting foreign tourists would be a strategic mistake; still, it might be a good idea to check in with your appropriate travel advisories. In Australia log onto **www.smartraveller.gov.au**; in Canada **www.voyage.gc.ca**; in New Zealand

Tips Frommer's Favorite Local Tour Company

Using a local travel agent can make anybody a bit skittish, but expert in Turkey, and particularly Istanbul, is the English-proficient **Credo Tours** (✆ **0212/254-8175;** fax 0212/237-9670; www.credo.com.tr), specializing in creating private jaunts or theme tours on special request.

safetravel.govt.nz; in the U.K. **www.fco.gov.uk**; in the U.S. **http://travel.state.gov/travel**.

For particular concerns for single female travelers, see the box "Important Tips for Single Women Travelers," below.

7 SPECIALIZED TRAVEL RESOURCES

LGBT TRAVELERS

Although homosexuality is legal in Turkey, we're talking about a fairly conservative culture, so discretion is advisable, even if Turkish men are into more public displays of affection with each other than with their wives. Still gayness is coming more and more out of the closet in Turkey; in 2009 more than 3,000 members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community attended the Pride March in Istanbul. Same-sex couples now have a local resource in **www.turkeygay.net**. The site lists gay-friendly hotels and links to further resources. **Istanbul Gay** (www.istanbulgay.com) provides Istanbul-specific resources such as gay/lesbian guides, gay bar tours, and gay-friendly hotels. ***Kaos GL*** (www.kaosgl.com) was the first gay and lesbian magazine in Turkey; its online presence has a substantial section in English with features addressing issues affecting gays and lesbians in Turkey.

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Almost every hotel with an elevator has at least one handicapped-accessible room, although five-star hotels are more apt to cover all bases like grip handles and lower sinks. Although ramps have begun to appear at Turkish brick-and-mortar museums, don't expect seamless access. (The crumbling ruins of outdoor archaeological sites are another story altogether; confirm with your travel agent that your needs will be accommodated.) However, Turkish hospitality being what it is, it'll be the odd tour guide or group leader who won't bend over backward to accommodate your individual needs.

FAMILY TRAVEL

Turks love children, and fawn all over them as a matter of course. Taken to the not-so-extreme, a total stranger may stroke your child's hair to show his or her benign affection. Back home, this would set off alarm bells; in Turkey, this is actually just a cultural norm. As for sightseeing, Istanbul is a veritable treasure chest of the magical and exotic, making exploration with the brood a delight for all involved. Kids seem to love scrambling around toppled columns and ancient ruins, exploring underground cisterns (especially the ones with water in them), and poking around the very colorful and stimulating Grand Bazaar.

If you're planning on renting a car or getting around with a tour company's car, keep in mind that car seats are considered a luxury item in Turkey, so ask/reserve ahead of time to be sure you can get one. Almost all hotels offer cots on request to accommodate families together in a room, and many restaurants have highchairs (when they don't they'll find some way to improvise). Other baby and toddler items are widely available (diapers, UHT milk), but if you're set on using a particular brand, better bring it along. Bottled baby food can be difficult to find, but restaurants will probably be more than willing to purée whatever you want.

Meanwhile, almost all tourist services (hotels, ferryboats) offer some kind of discount for children, usually 50% of the full price for children 6 to 12, while kids 5

Tips Important Tips for Single Women Travelers

Bait & Switch It's hard to believe, but in the major tourist areas of Turkey, particularly in the streets of Sultanahmet, an entire industry thrives on the acquisition and manipulation of emotions for economic gain. Foreign women, receptive, even eager for new and exotic experiences, are just ripe for the picking. Although less than attractive ones are particularly vulnerable, any single girl with cash in the bank and foreign nationality is a target.

Sultanahmet is filled with professional "gigolos" practiced in the art of courtship and persuasion. The better ones come armed with scripts; the statements "You foreigners don't know how to trust anyone!" and "You foreigners think that we (Turks) are all thieves and barbarians" effectively disarm even the most remotely liberal.

Inevitably the topic of how bad things are economically will be carefully broached: how he can't pay his bills, how worried he is over his debts, and how any moment the authorities will repossess his furniture. Some invent elaborate stories of woe; and before you know it, the woman is offering—no, insisting—that he accept her help.

Some seducers even take this kind of behavior to its limits by pursuing the game as far as the wedding contract. But the most deplorable of the lot have been known to forge the marriage certificate with the assistance of those in the neighborhood even less scrupulous than themselves.

But this kind of behavior doesn't represent all of Turkey, and overall women traveling alone in Turkey are treated with an almost exaggerated courtesy. In some cases, a woman will be in a better position to experience the openness of the Turkish people than if traveling en masse. With all of this warmth and hospitality, it's difficult to know how to temper one's instincts toward friendliness without affirming the general opinion among the more conservative class of Turks that all Western women are prostitutes. Even an innocent greeting or seemingly harmless camaraderie can be misinterpreted, so it's important to find a balance between polite formality and the openness that North American, European, and Australian women find so normal.

Dining Practically speaking, no matter how modern the country may seem on the surface, don't be surprised if you're the only female in a restaurant. Eateries often have an *aile salonu* (family salon), an unintimidating dining area provided for men, women, couples, and anyone else not wishing to dine among groups of smoking, drinking, mustached Turks.

and under generally get loads of freebies. Unfortunately, this discount does not apply to admission tickets to museums and sites for preteens. You'll also save a load of dough thanks to the Turkish tradition of providing breakfast with the room. To locate accommodations, restaurants, and attractions that are particularly kid-friendly, see the "Kids" icon throughout this guide.

Tips Culinary Travel

Only a true foodie can appreciate the rewards of planning a vacation with a special emphasis on the eating habits of a country. In Turkey, where much of the language and expressions refer back to the kitchen, there's no better way to get to the heart of this culture. Cooking classes have become so much in vogue these days that it seems that everyone is offering one. The **Istanbul Culinary Institute,** Meşrutiyet Cad. 59, Tepebaşı (✆ **0212/251-2214;** www.istanbulculinary.com), offers professional and amateur programs, as well as short, 1-day crash courses in techniques (cutting, stocks, or sauces), Ottoman cuisine (meat dishes with fruit, for example), or in Turkish basics (rice, böreks, and mantıs). There are also monthly gastronomic walking tours where groups of at least four people get a crash course in street food. One such tour stumbles over to the Kumkapı wholesale fish market at 4am! Tours cost about 100TL per person; custom tours are available for 200TL per person. **Turkish Flavours,** Vali Konak Cad. Ugur Apt. 14/3, Nişantaşı (✆ **0532/218-0653;** www.turkishflavours.com), takes this culinary concept into private homes in Istanbul and on the road through private food-focused Istanbul day excursions and tailor-made itineraries into the heart of Anatolia. All tours get to the heart of the Turkish culture through market excursions, home cooking, and even wine tastings.

SENIOR TRAVEL

Always mention the fact that you're a senior when you first make your travel reservations. For example, many hotels offer senior discounts. Don't be shy about asking for discounts, but always carry some kind of identification, such as your passport, that shows your date of birth.

Once arrived, the rules get a little fuzzy. Senior discounts (for those 65 and older) are offered at state-run museums but are generally *available only to Turkish citizens and E.U. residents.* Some of Turkey's domestic airlines offer senior discounts for domestic flights (available to all seniors), so remember to ask when making a booking.

8 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

One of the things that continually amazes me about Turkey is its ability to leapfrog over many of the challenges that traditionally the "West" has had to grapple with. Turkey seems to be a caldron of budding (and more recently, established) entrepreneurship, and all things organic, natural, vegetarian, healthy, and environmentally sound are being incorporated into the way hotels and restaurants do business. Indeed, Istanbul's iconic building, the Atatürk Cultural Center, is undergoing a massive modernization project that will make it a model for environmentally friendly restoration projects.

Elsewhere in Istanbul and around the countryside—even in the heartland where "natural" is assumed—organic is the new buzzword, and establishments that are thinking about these issues are certainly

letting the public know. One standout is the **Five Boutique Hotel** (p. 90), the first entirely organic hotel in Turkey.

Istanbul has two organic outdoor markets, the **Ekolojik Halk Pazarı** in Şişli, which was started in 2008 by the environmental group Buğday (www.bugday.org) and **City Farm** in the Istinye Park shopping center (a noticeably higher-income area). The new **Macrocenter** grocery store brings all things wholesome under one roof with, at last count, nine locations in Istanbul alone. In addition, Istanbul now has dozens of specialized grocers, shops selling all-natural products, and eateries serving only "whole" foods. For chemical-free produce at open markets, look for fruit and vegetables designated as *bahçemden* ("from my garden").

Many of Turkey's vehicles still run on diesel fuel, although *kürsünsüz* (unleaded) is also pervasive. The newer green city buses are also considered *ekolojik,* while the new hybrid Metrobuses (not detailed in "Getting Around" earlier in this chapter because they primarily serve the outer suburbs) reduce both energy consumption and travel time in Istanbul.

Throughout this guide, I've tried to highlight establishments with practices that are good for the planet.

9 STAYING CONNECTED

TELEPHONES

To call Istanbul from abroad:

1. Dial the international access code: 011 from the U.S. and Canada; 00 from the U.K., Ireland, or New Zealand; or 0011 from Australia.
2. Dial the country code: 90.
3. Dial the city code **212** for the European side and **216** for the Asian side and then the number. If the number you are trying to dial is a mobile number (beginning instead with 555, 542, or 532 and their derivatives), use this number instead of the city code.

To make international calls from Istanbul: First dial 00 and then the country code (Australia 61, U.S. or Canada 1, Ireland 353, New Zealand 64, U.K. 44). Next you dial the area code and number. For example, if you wanted to call the British Embassy in Washington, D.C., you would dial 00-1-202-588-7800.

To make local calls while in town: In order to call the Asian side from the European side, you must dial 0216 and then the number. For calls to the same side, dial the city code but not the 0. To call outside of Istanbul but within Turkey, you must dial the 0 followed by the area code and seven-digit number.

For directory assistance: Dial ✆ **115** (in Turkish) if you're looking for a number inside Istanbul. Unfortunately, there is no international directory.

For operator assistance: If you need operator assistance in making a call, dial ✆ **115** if you're trying to make an international call and ✆ **131** (in Turkish) if you want to call a number in Turkey.

Toll-free numbers: Numbers beginning with 0800 within Turkey are toll-free, but calling a toll-free number in another country from Turkey costs the same as an overseas call.

National numbers: More and more prevalent is the local 444 number (no area code). These numbers connect you to service call centers for national businesses for the cost of a local call.

CELLPHONES

The three letters that define much of the world's wireless capabilities are **GSM** (Global System for Mobile Communications), a big, seamless network that makes for easy cross-border cellphone use

throughout Europe and dozens of other countries worldwide. In the U.S., T-Mobile and AT&T use this quasi-universal system; in Canada, Microcell and some Rogers customers are GSM, and all Europeans and most Australians use GSM. GSM phones function with a removable plastic SIM card, encoded with your phone number and account information. If your cellphone is on a GSM system and you have a world-capable multiband phone such as many Sony Ericsson, Motorola, or Samsung models, you can make and receive calls across developed areas around much of the globe. Just call your wireless operator and ask for "international roaming" to be activated on your account. Unfortunately, per-minute charges can be high—usually $1 to $1.50 in western Europe and up to $5 in places such as Russia and Indonesia.

Alternatively (and particularly for those with infuriating "locked" GSM phones), you can pick up a new, low-end handset at the airport in Istanbul and load in a SIM card on one of the local networks. Both Vodafone and Avea have kiosks in the international arrivals terminal in Istanbul. A new basic Nokia phone costs 70TL and the SIM card (which gives you your phone number and network connection) costs 18TL. The SIM card comes with 150 preloaded minutes, but that's not really much so you may want to buy some additional minutes if you plan on calling or texting overseas.

INTERNET & E-MAIL

With Your Own Computer

It's the rare hotel, restaurant, resort, cafe, and even retailer in Turkey that doesn't offer **Wi-Fi.** Larger (more expensive) hotels and airports usually charge a fee for usage (varying from as little as 9TL at the airport to 30TL per day at someplace like the Ceylan Inter-Continental Hotel). To find public Wi-Fi hot spots at your destination, go to **www.jiwire.com**; its Hotspot Finder holds the world's largest directory of public wireless hot spots.

For dialup access, most business-class hotels throughout the world offer dataports for laptop modems, or ISDN hookups for high-speed Internet access.

Without Your Own Computer

Almost all hotels offer Internet access via a computer in the lobby, Wi-Fi, or an in-room ISDN line free or for a nominal fee. Internet cafes are generally bunched around Taksim Square, on the upper floors of the side streets perpendicular to Istiklal Caddesi, and more sparsely along Divanyolu in the Old City.

Most major airports have **Internet kiosks** that provide basic Web access for a per-minute fee that's usually higher than cybercafe prices.

VOICE OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL (VOIP)

If you have Web access while traveling, consider a broadband-based telephone service (in technical terms, **Voice over Internet protocol,** or **VoIP**) such as Skype (www.skype.com), which allows you to make free international calls if you use their services from your laptop or in a cybercafe. You'll want to have a headset with speaker capability if you're "skyping" in a public place. Check the sites for details on restrictions.

10 TIPS ON ACCOMMODATIONS

Hotels in Turkey follow the international star-rating system, and properties are classified according to amenities and services provided like fitness centers or conference space. Because the level and qualities of services can fluctuate wildly, a worn-out, old five-star with moldy bathroom tile might look better on paper than a brand-new,

sky-lit gem with nothing to offer but basic clean rooms, stunning balconies, and a pool. In hotels rated three stars or lower, it is common for the bathroom to have a "Roman shower" rather than an enclosed bathtub or shower stall. This is usually a feature of budget-level hotels and is essentially a shower head on the wall and a drain in the floor. In some cases, you'll get a square, enamel stall basin and a shower curtain, in which case a practiced proficiency with the hand-held shower head will eventually ensure the least amount of leakage on the bathroom floor. In the hotel listings in this book, the presence of the Roman shower setup is included in the listing.

The category of hotels in Turkey designated as "S" or Special Class provides an added layer of confusion. Special Class hotels are typically restored historic properties or new boutique hotels. In this category, room size and amenities such as TVs are anything but standard, and even the use of the word "boutique" can be a bit of a stretch. One way to assess sight unseen what you are getting is to look at the rates—higher prices often bring a higher level of quality. The second and more effective approach is to follow the advice in this book. We've been to all of these and know what you're getting.

The earliest restorations of these "S" class hotels were completed by the state-owned Turkish Touring Club. Now everyone has gotten in on the act. These small hotels can be owned by single men, single women, families, foreigners, high-rolling entrepreneurs, and carpet sellers with adjacent showrooms (how convenient for them).

The following are features and quirks that you can expect to encounter in bed-and-breakfasts (more often called "boutique hotels" and generally Special Class), pensions, and hotels not affiliated with an international chain.

Most hotels in Turkey seem to have more rooms with twin beds than doubles, so unless you specify that you want a double, called a "French" bed, you and your partner will feel like a couple out of a 1950s sitcom. Fitted sheets seem to be an anomaly in Turkey, so if you're a restless sleeper, expect to get a view of the mattress in the morning, particularly if you're staying in a budget property (or in a twin bed). Ask for an extra sheet if there's nothing between you and the blanket, as bed-making habits vary from hotel to hotel, and some provide only the duvet (with clean cover). And not even the Four Seasons Hotel will spare you from the startling blare of the neighborhood's *muezzin* at sunrise. TVs are generally a standard feature in rooms, but even a TV with a satellite hookup will limit you to BBC World, CNN, and endless hours of cycling tournaments. Local (cable) programming is at least captivating, with reruns of *Guys and Dolls* or *The Terminator* in Turkish.

Be aware, too, that an ongoing problem of not just the older hotels is the rapidity in which a clear drain will get clogged and tile grout moldy. While I've kept recommendations of these hotels to the exceptional minimum, it only takes one season, so go easy on me if a hotel listed here didn't snake the drain or regrout before your stay.

Many hotels rely exclusively on Mediterranean solar power, which sounds great until you get in a cold shower at sunrise. This is increasingly rare, however, as many establishments are installing backup generators for "24-hour hot water." Power outages are an unavoidable part of daily life in this growing city with an aging infrastructure, and because the water supply operates on an electric pumping system, there will be no water for the duration of the outage, usually only a couple of hours. This is increasingly rare, but not unheard of. In the sweaty heat of the summer, this is where the neighborhood *hamam* comes in handy.

One additional service offered by five-star hotels is babysitting, arranged by the hotel through reputable outside agencies.

PRICES & TAXES

Unless stated otherwise, the price of hotel rooms listed in this guide includes breakfast and tax. In higher-priced hotels, tax and breakfast are not included, although it is often possible to score a promotional rate that does. (Tax on services such as airport transfers is charged at the 18% rate; check with your concierge if you have any questions about taxes on other services, such as use of the spa.) Also, prices listed here are the rates quoted on the hotel's proprietary website (for high season), which are as close to reality as you can get without haggling over the phone. Certain of the larger chain hotels use booking systems that price rooms according to real-time demand, so I've tried to paint as accurate a picture as possible given the inherent and often unexpected fluctuations of supply and demand. (Rack rates are those fictional prices posted behind the reception and that are almost never quoted—not even to the most desperate last-minute walk-in.) All bets are off in Istanbul between Christmas and New Year's, as well as during the Formula 1 event (late May, early June) and other major conventions, when rates go up-up and away. Also, many hotels offer a 5% to 10% discount for payment in cash.

In rare cases the currency of operation is not specified by the hotel on its website. This leaves the hotelier some wiggle room to take advantage of the stronger currencies. For example, say I contact the hotel for the price of a room and the website says 300. Before I get a response, I'll be asked where I'm calling from. If I say the U.S., the quote will be in dollars, or 447TL. The price quote in euros by contrast would be 300€ or 685TL. Get it? This can be quite a shock when you go to pay and you have no written confirmation of the rate quote. Always get it in writing, as this scam is becoming sadly more prevalent in the smaller hotels. ***Note:*** Sometimes the hotel will simply ask you where you're calling from in order to be sincerely helpful by quoting the price in a currency convenient to you. Again, it's best to do this type of business in writing.

Prices quoted in this guide for airport transfers (mostly free for bookings of 3 nights or more) refer to pickup only from the Atatürk International Airport. Transfers from Sabiha Gökçen are more than double, if offered at all. Parents with kids will be pleased to learn that children 6 and under, and in some cases 12 and under, stay free, and often cots will be provided. While this is almost universal, it is wise to double-check when you book.

4

Suggested Istanbul Itineraries

Frankly, 3 days is scarcely enough time to explore very much of anything anywhere, let alone Istanbul, the seat of three world empires. Expect only to cover the bare basics of Istanbul, and to leave thoroughly exhausted, with an aching back and calloused feet. But you will also leave culturally enriched and pining for more. This chapter gives you a rough outline of what you can see, on a load of caffeine, in 1, 2, or 3 days in Istanbul. Consider these itineraries as a suggestion of Istanbul's greatest hits, the top sights you will want to cover regardless of the length of your trip.

1 CITY LAYOUT

In many ways, time seems to have stood still in Istanbul, especially in the neighborhoods of the Old City. Yet, at the same time, progress in the form of transportation, technology, academics, and global engagement have set Istanbul and Turkey on a forward-moving course that makes your head spin. Still, in the contradictory spirit of this city bridging continents and cultures, many feel a reverse tug in the political and religious swing of the pendulum. One might visit Istanbul a dozen times over a lifetime, and at each visit be greeted both by a familiar scene and by an altogether unexpected paradigm.

ISTANBUL'S NEIGHBORHOODS IN BRIEF

The sprawling muddle that is Istanbul-the-city comprises nearly 260 sq. km (100 sq. miles) of layered history spread over two continents. The city of Istanbul is part of the province of Istanbul—think New York City, inside New York State—allowing for a bit of confusion. But seeing as how this is a city guide, we will mainly concern ourselves with the three central districts of **Beyoğlu, Beşiktaş,** and **Fatih,** plus opportunistically throw in the highlights of the Bosphorus (both European and Asian sides).

The European and Asian sides of the city are bisected by the churning north-south artery that is the Bosphorus Straits. Strategic waterway and stuff of legends, the Bosphorus is the conduit for nations of the Black Sea into the coveted trade routes of the Mediterranean and beyond.

The European side of Istanbul is itself separated by the estuary known in English as the Golden Horn and in Turkish as the **Haliç.** Bordering the south of the Golden Horn is the district of Fatih, neatly cinctured by what remains of the Byzantine-era defensive walls. Fatih is entirely comprised of the **Historic Peninsula** (aka Old Stamboul, Old Istanbul, and Rome of the East). To the north of the Golden Horn are Beyoğlu and Beşiktaş, a hodgepodge of ancient and modern, of historic and progressive.

So as not to confuse you with a short description of every corner of Istanbul, it's important to know that neighborhoods generally bear the name of a major landmark, such as the mosque that serves the quarter, and that neighborhood delineations are anything but clear-cut. Below is a liberal selection of areas ranging from the "must see" to "off the beaten track," but this list is by no means exhaustive.

European Side: Old Istanbul

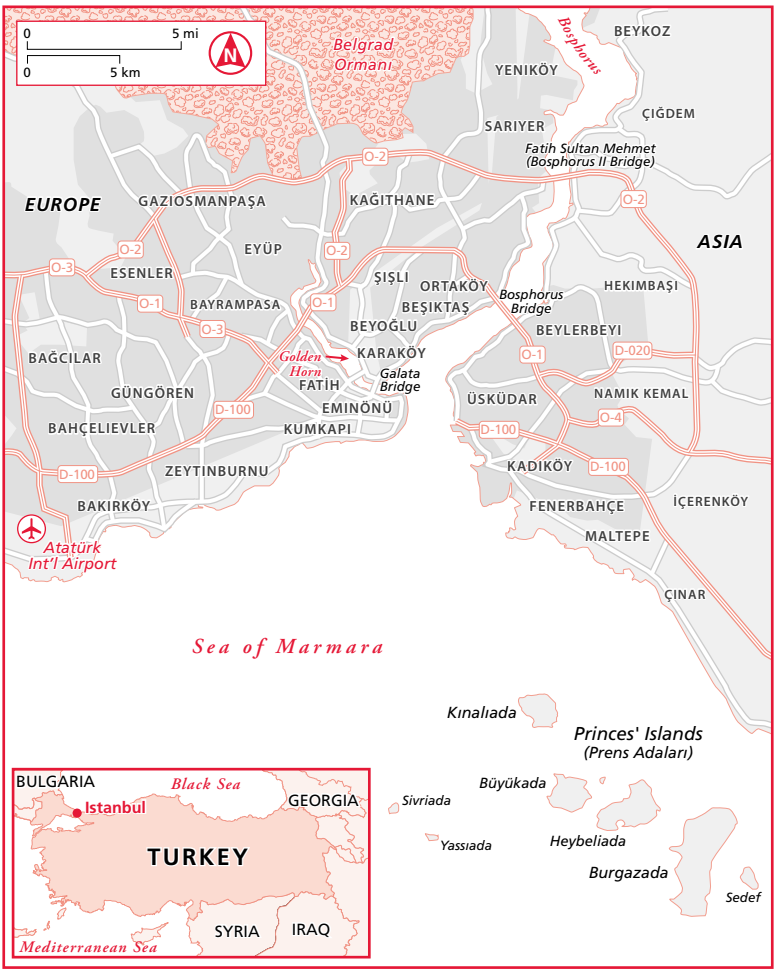
The Historic Peninsula, home to the remnants of Classical, Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman eras, sits in the modern-day district of **Fatih** (through 2008, this was actually two districts: Fatih and Eminönü, now merged). The neighborhoods that live within the boundaries of the ancient city walls are oriented around the famed seven hills in a nearly 22 sq. km (8½ sq. miles) area. Eminönü refers to the neighborhood and transportation hub at the base of the Galata Bridge. This transport hub is where you'll find ferries to just about everywhere, a metropolitan bus and *dolmuş* hub, the Egyptian Spice Bazaar, the Yeni Valide Camii (New Queen Mother's Mosque), and Rustem Paşa Mosque, as well as a frenetic warren of passageways and back streets that wind their way uphill through local shops to the Grand Bazaar. Just steps to the east of Eminönü's transport hub is the Sirkeci train station (final stop of the legendary Orient Express), a bustling and utilitarian hub of people with places to go. As expected, it's easy to find comparatively affordable food and lodging around this neighborhood as opposed to the more popular and adjacent neighborhood of Sultanahmet. The easternmost tip of the peninsula known as **Sarayburnu** or Seraglio Point (literally, palace point) is where Topkapı Palace presides over the strategic convergence of the Marmara Sea, the mouth of the Bosphorus, and the Golden Horn.

At the heart of the Old City is the neighborhood of **Sultanahmet,** centered around the Hippodrome—ancient racetrack, political arena, and present-day commons. Anchoring the historic center of the city are the Blue Mosque and the Ayasofya, two massive and magnificent edifices challenging each other from opposite ends of Sultanahmet Park. Bordering Sultanahmet to the southeast is the as-of-yet still characteristically residential quarter of **Cankurtaran,** named for the train station at Ahırkapi Gate where the commuter rail used to stop and, for all intents and purposes, absorbed under the umbrella heading of Sultanahmet.

To the southwest of Sultanahmet along the Marmara Sea and along the ancient Sea Walls is **Kadirga Limanı,** named for the silted ancient port beneath, and now, as real estate around Sultanahmet continues to soar, a former no-go fringe neighborhood undergoing a renaissance.

To the west of Kadirga Limanı is **Kumkapı,** destination of the daily catch by local fishermen, location of the city's fish market, and home to a dense cluster of touristy fish restaurants.

The Old City is divided by the main avenue of **Divanyolu** (whose name changes to Yeniçeriler Caddesi and then Ordu Caddesi as it runs westward from the Ayasofya to the Land Walls). Paving what was formerly the ceremonial entrance to the Great Palace, Divanyolu begins (or ends, if you were the emperor) at Sultanahmet Park, running westward through the neighborhoods of **Çemberlitaş,** former site of the Forum of Constantine and close to the Nuruosmaniye entrance to the Grand Bazaar; **Beyazıt,** built on the ruins of the Forum of Theodosius and named for the Beyazıt Mosque Complex; and **Laleli.** North and west of Beyazıt is the neighborhood of **Süleymaniye,** named after the mosque complex of the same name, itself bordered to the north and west by **Vefa,** a residential area of old Ottoman homes in various states of restoration or dilapidation.



Back at Divanyolu (now Ordu Caddesi), the road splits just as it enters **Aksaray.** The tramway, which follows Divanyolu, continues along the southernmost avenue (Millet Caddesi, aka Türgüt Özal Caddesi), while the northern fork becomes the major thoroughfare of Vatan Caddesi (aka Adnan Menderes Bulvarı).

The district of **Fatih** (which before merging with Eminönü was confined to the area of the Old City between Atatürk Bulvarı and the Land Walls) takes its name from the Fatih Mosque and complex, built by and for Mehmet the Conqueror immediately after the conquest. It was constructed on the site of the Havariyun, the second-most revered Byzantine church after the Ayasofya, which was the victim of earthquakes and fire. The prominence of the district in both the Byzantine and

Ottoman eras can be credited with the great number of monuments that dot this now bustling working-class conglomeration of diverse and authentic (and yes, some fundamentalist) neighborhoods.

From north to south beginning at the Golden Horn are the twin quarters of **Balat** and **Fener,** Ottoman-era enclaves where Armenian, Greek, and Jewish immigrants first settled. This combined quarter is thick with the crumbling remains of monumental Byzantine palaces, synagogues, schools, and mosques and is even the home of the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchate.

Several of the defunct Byzantine defensive gates continue to exert their influence on the surrounding neighborhoods that now bear these names: **Edirnekapı,** which is the gateway to the Church of Saint Savior in Chora or Kariye Camii; and **Ayvansaray,** which sits at the base of the Old Galata Bridge near the remains of the Blachernae Palace and sections of the land walls. To the west of Adnan Menderes Bulvarı is a neighborhood that has been in the news quite a bit of late. The conglomerate of mismatched, crumbling, and colorfully painted houses on and around **Sulukule Caddesi** earned its renown as the oldest Roma settlement in the world—scheduled for demolition and redevelopment. Perhaps the scheduled completion in advance of 2010 is a bit ambitious, leaving a tiny window of opportunity to see a bit of cultural history.

Fatih's southeastern-most point is the busy port of **Yenikapı,** departure point for sea buses to Bursa, the Marmara Islands, and the southern shores of the Marmara Sea. Yenikapı is the site of the construction of one of the metro stations for the in-progress Marmaray project, made famous by the extraordinary archaeological discoveries being made there.

Following the southern Marmara Sea shoreline is the **Sahil Yolu** (or the coastal road); this main thoroughfare connects the Old City with the airport and suburbs. The last neighborhood of interest as the road heads out of Fatih is **Yedikule** (literally, seven towers), the fortress constructed by Fatih Mehmet the Conqueror incorporating the earlier Theodosian land and sea walls. Almost no one goes to this neighborhood or museum, which is why you should go. Fewer and fewer places like this can be found in Istanbul these days.

While they are not within the district boundaries laid out above, I need to mention a few additional neighborhoods in the district of **Eyüp,** which straddles the northern banks of the Golden Horn. West of the estuary and north of Fatih (above Fener and Balat) is the quarter of **Eyüp Sultan,** named for the Prophet Mohammad's warrior companion and standard-bearer, and one of the holiest figures in Islam. Tradition holds that Eyüp Sultan was slain in battle on this hill, and the site, marked by a mosque complex and tomb, is now a point of pilgrimage for Muslims. To the east of the Golden Horn (and still Eyüp) are the industrialized sections of **Sütlüce** and **Hasköy** (to name only two). Although the eastern shores of the Golden Horn are mostly occupied with shipbuilding, some venues stand out, such as the Rahmi Koç Museum and the restored Silahtarağa Power Plant, housing the SantralIstanbul galleries.

European Side: Beyoglu, Beşiktaş & the Bosphorus Villages of Europe

If the Old City is the jewel of empires, then the landmass on the opposite side of the Golden Horn is its crown.

The fairly unwieldy district of **Beyoğlu,** which also straddles the centuries, is subdivided, at least colloquially, into a mosaic of characteristic quarters, with slightly more modern layers of historic, cultural, religious, and political reference than those on the other side of the Golden Horn. This triangle of Istanbul is connected to the Old City by the Galata

Bridge (at Eminönü and the opposite port of Karaköy) and via the Atatürk Bridge.

At the base of the Galata Bridge on the shore opposite Eminönü is **Karaköy,** a functionally messy and exhilarating transport hub worth a visit for its local eateries along with a number of significant monumental Ottoman constructions. Recent additions include the Istanbul Modern, as well as the leafy tea gardens and water-pipe cafes of **Tophane.** Karaköy is the modern-day designation for **Galata,** which today more colloquially refers to the charming cobbled hill extending up from the shoreline from the fortified area between the Atatürk and Galata bridges to the Galata Tower. Istanbul's earliest (pre-classical) settlements were found in and around Galata, today a hodgepodge of steeply sloping streets radiating from the Galata Tower. Where Karaköy and Galata merge, you'll find a wealth of architectural monuments left by the European communities that thrived here during the Ottoman period.

At the summit of Galata Hill is **Tünel,** which also refers to the very short and very old one-stop funicular called Tünel. To make matters worse, both the upper and lower entrances of the funicular are called Tünel; thus, to avoid confusion, I refer to the area around the upper entrance as **Upper Tünel** and the lower as **Lower Tünel** or Karaköy.

Radiating around Upper Tünel (a part of Beyoğlu also referred to specifically as Beyoğlu) are the turn-of-the-20th-century Belle Epoque buildings—including a high density of foreign consulates—of 19th-century **Pera.** Pera recalls a bygone era of wealth, entitlement, and gaiety. Today, strolls along the previous Grand Rue de Pera have evolved into a nightly crush of humanity walking up and down the same artery now known as Istiklal Caddesi.

Lining the slopes southeast of Istiklal Caddesi is the steep-stepped quarter of **Cihangir.** Alternating antiques and artistic shops can be found on and around **Çukurcuma.** These combined neighborhoods attract artists, diplomats, expat journalists, and just plain commuters to its streets full of quirky cafes, restaurants, bars, and antiques boutiques.

If Beyoğlu is the heart and soul of modern Istanbul, then **Istiklal Caddesi** is its lifeline. This hectic shopping street bisects the district north from Tünel to the modern, pulsating, chaotic nucleus of the city known as **Taksim Square,** Istanbul's equivalent to New York's Times Square. Standing at the center is a statue of Atatürk and the founding fathers of Turkey, representing on one side the War of Independence and on the other the Republic. The Atatürk Cultural Center (Atatürk Kültür Merkezi) serves as a venue for shows, opera, ballet, concerts and the Biennial; the ugly old building (instead of being torn down, as was considered) is currently undergoing restoration, with completion scheduled for sometime in 2010. The area is yet another commuter hub, city commons, business center, and open-air food court. A concentration of full-service, high-rise hotels targeting businesspeople makes the area around Taksim a perfect place for bustle and convenience. The location is also connected to a transportation network that includes the metro, a recently restored cable car/tramway along Istiklal Caddesi, a plethora of municipal buses, and a daunting network of *dolmuş* (minibuses).

As the city's, even the country's, center, Taksim Square and the neighborhoods on its fringe are thickly dotted with nightclubs, seedy bars, and Internet cafes, attracting the indigents and pilferers of Istanbul. The pre-gentrified neighborhood of **Tarlabaşı,** located on the opposite side of Tarlabaşı Caddesi, is home to a high density of crumbling architectural gems, but it's also where you'll find Istanbul's

subculture of transvestites, criminal indigents, and prostitutes, newly displaced from the now-hip neighborhood of **Çukurcuma.** Steer clear for now, but watch this space, as the municipality (and real estate investors) have their sights eagerly set on this neighborhood.

The city gets increasingly more elite the farther north of Taksim you go, with trendy and upscale neighborhoods belonging to the district of **Şişli** then sprawling out to the business districts to the north (and east of the Bosphorus villages). Immediately to the north (and inland) of Taksim Square is the commercial area of **Harbiye,** which sidles up to the fashionable shopping neighborhood of **Nişantaşı,** a pleasant cross between New York's SoHo and Madison Avenue (this is technically in the district of Şişli, but never mind). Boutiques along **Teşvikiye Caddesi** and the smaller side streets are stocked with high-quality merchandise in elegant settings, with major names like Mudo, Emporio Armani, Vakko, and Beyman. Sandwiched between Teşvikiye, Harbiye, and the Bosphorus is **Maçka,** a neighborhood of business and meeting-style hotels mostly feeding into the Lutfi Kırdar Convention Center.

Beşiktaş-the-district refers to the Bosphorus-front real estate above Beyoğlu, made popular by a long string of sultans, paşas, and empresses who constructed European-style palaces all along the historic Straits, including the Dolmabahçe, Yıldız, and Çırağan palaces. The better hotels (Les Ottomans, the Four Seasons, W, Radisson SAS) have also of late staked their claim. Like the demoted (former district absorbed by Fatih) area of Eminönü, **Beşiktaş** is a bustling port neighborhood for shopping, living, and commuting.

To the north is the uptown village with the downtown feel—**Ortaköy,** which sits at the base of the Bosphorus Bridge.

The waterfront northward becomes a picturesque chain of fishing coves transformed into bourgeois residential neighborhoods teeming with cafes and fish restaurants as far north as the Black Sea mouth of the Bosphorus. These include **Kuruçeşme, Arnavutköy, Bebek, Rumeli Hisarı, Emirgan, Istinye, Tarabya, Sarıyer,** and **Rumeli Kavağı.** You can visit these by hopping on a local bus or sightseeing from the bow of a Bosphorus ferry.

The Asian Side

The Asian side of the Bosphorus is a sprawling collection of quiet and surprisingly Europeanized residential neighborhoods with varying degrees of historical and cultural interest. Next to private vehicles, municipal buses are the primary mode of transportation, making a casual and spontaneous jaunt over to the Asian side a less than efficient prospect. However, because of the phenomenal views from the newer hotels (which also provide complimentary boat shuttle service to the European side), Asia might actually be a reasonable place to hang your hat, particularly if it's a wedding veil.

On the northernmost shore is **Anadolu Kavağı,** harboring the remains of a Genoese castle refortified numerous times under the Ottoman sultans.

The sleepy fishing village of **Kanlica** is best known for its fabled yogurt, more so than for its two major landmarks: the Iskender Paşa Mosque, built by Sinan in the 16th century and named after the then governor of Baghdad; and the Ismail Ağa Coffee House, which now dishes out more yogurt than the coffee that made it famous in 1871.

Just to the south is **Anadolu Hisarı,** the fortress built by Beyazıt I as a springboard for his siege on Istanbul. It took another 56 years for his son, Mehmet (the Conqueror), to breach the Byzantine defenses.

The tiny and enchanting village of **Çengelköy** owes much of its popularity to

Fun Facts Did You Know?

Beşiktaş, meaning "cradle stone," is named after the crib in which Jesus was born, which was thought to have been brought here by early Christians.

the thousand-year-old oak trees whose colossal limbs enfold themselves around the waterside cafes and restaurants clustered around the boat landing.

In the 17th century, **Beylerbeyı** was the location of choice for summer palaces for the elite. The crown jewel was naturally Beylerbeyı Sarayı, commanding the banks above the Bosphorus Bridge.

Where many of the Bosphorus villages of Istanbul's Asian side have developed to mirror Istanbul's decidedly European lifestyle, **Üsküdar,** with its numerous Ottoman-era mosques, fountains, *hamams, medreses,* and tombs maintains a more traditional vibe.

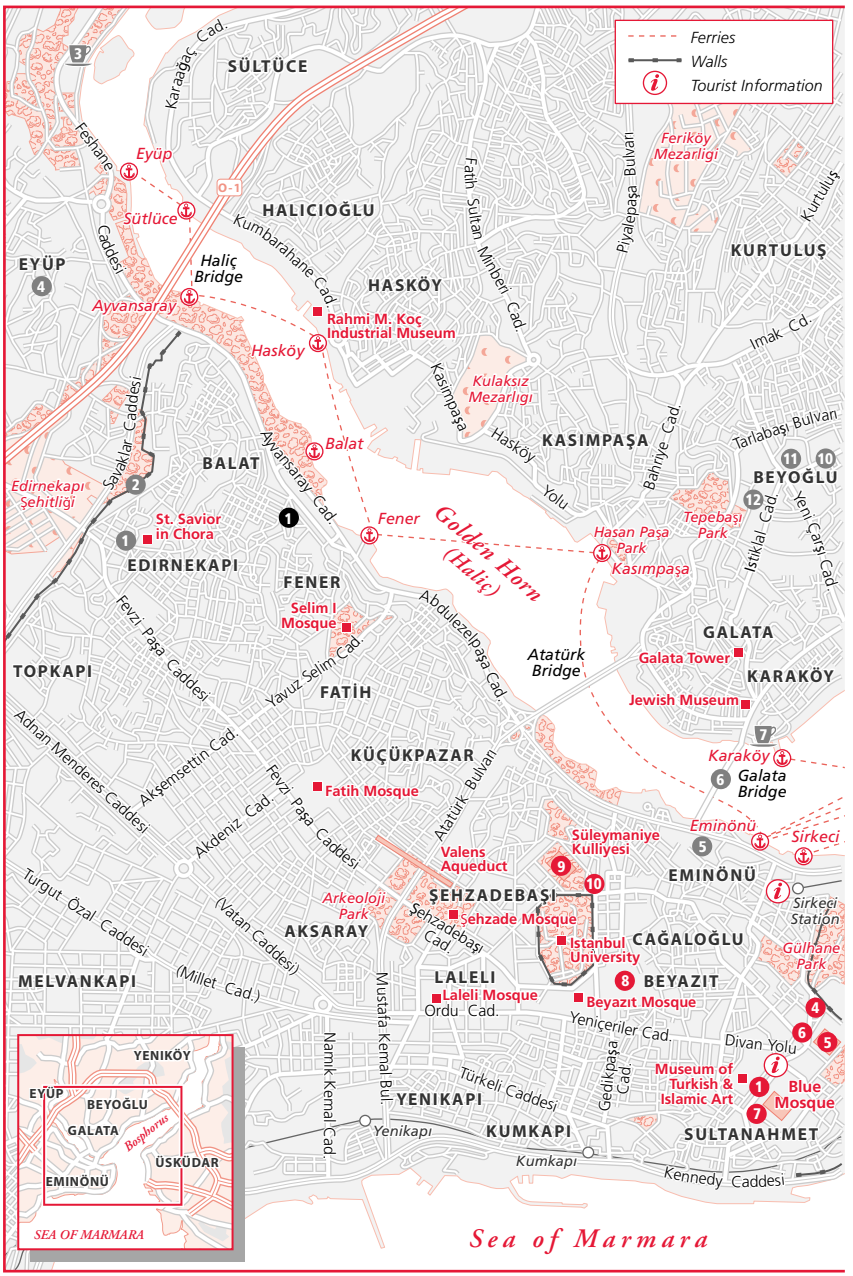
The bustling portside center of **Kadıköy** is a popular choice for day-trippers drawn to the typical cobbled walkways lined with fishmongers, neighborhood *lokantas,* coffee shops, antiques shops, and bookstores. On Tuesdays, the neighborhood pulls out all the stops with the very well attended Salı Pazarı ("Tuesday Bazaar").

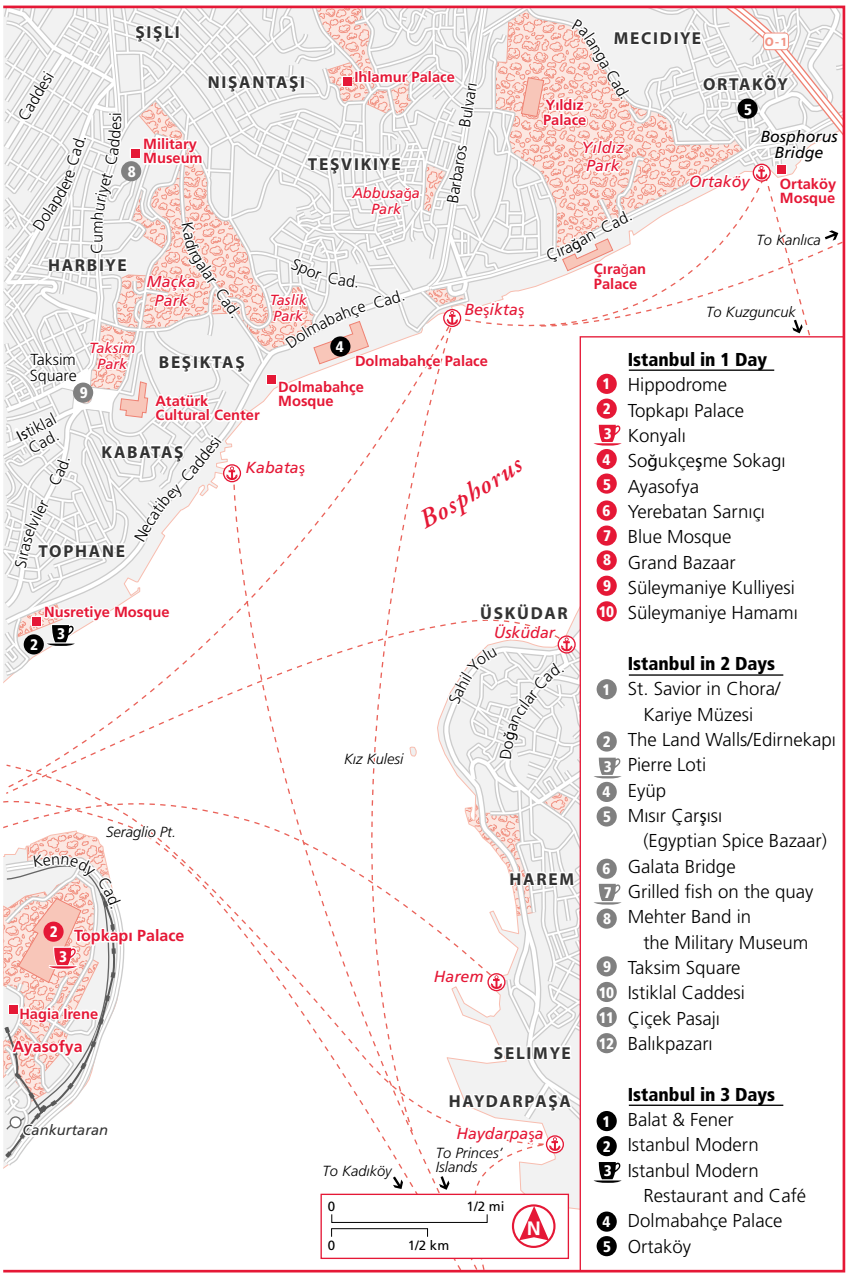
2 THE BEST OF ISTANBUL IN 1 DAY

The Byzantine, Roman, and Ottoman kings, Caesars, and sultans were quite obliging when they clustered their lives in, around, and on top of each other's centers of power. The headliners of each are conveniently located in and around the Old City neighborhood of Sultanahmet, which is where we will begin the day. By following this tour, you will beam yourself back and forth between empires with visits to the unforgettable and obligatory stops at the Hippodrome, the Ayasofya, the Yerebatan Cistern, the Blue Mosque, Topkapı Palace, and the Grand Bazaar. If Sunday or Monday is the 1 day you've allotted for Istanbul, it will be necessary to modify this tour, as the Grand Bazaar is closed on Sundays, while Monday is the day that most of the museums go dark. Unfortunately, because of an upsurge in tourism, you will not be alone at any of these sites. The sequence followed here attempts to mitigate the competition with busloads of tourists; but still, you'll have to be patient and gauge extra time for standing in line. Because of the longer days of summer, this day can be stretched out a bit, as museum hours generally extend to 7pm, as opposed to 4:30 or 5pm in winter. ***Start:*** *Hippodrome.*

❶ Hippodrome ★

A place for public spectacle, the Hippodrome hosted Roman and Byzantine celebrations and revolts, as well as Ottoman royal games and imperial weddings. Its narrative is as grand as it is gruesome. This is the place to get your historical and geographical bearings; remember this spot, as you will want to come back to one of the park benches and watch the people stroll by. During Ramadan, the municipality dresses up the Hippodrome in a nostalgic


Ferries
Walls
Tourist Information
SÜLTÜCE
Karaağaç Cad.
Feshane
Eyüp
Sütlüce
O-1
HALICIOĞLU
Kumbarahane Cad.
Haliç Bridge
EYÜP
Ayvansaray
HASKÖY
Rahmi M. Koç Industrial Museum
Hasköy
Fatih Sultan Mehmet Cad.
Piyalepaşa Bulvarı
Feriköy Mezarlığı
Kurtuluş
KURTULUŞ
İmak Cd.
Külaksız Mezarlığı
Kasımpaşa
Hasköy Yolu
KASIMPAŞA
Bahriye Cad.
Tarlabaşı Bulvarı
BEYOĞLU
Tepebaşı Park
İstiklal Cad.
Yeni Çarşı Cad.
Hasan Paşa Park
Kasımpaşa
Şaşkınlar Caddesi
Edirnekapı Şehitliği
BALAT
Ayvansaray Cad.
Balat
Fener
Golden Horn (Haliç)
St. Savior in Chora
EDIRNEKAPI
FENER
Selim I Mosque
Abdülezelpaşa Cad.
Atatürk Bridge
GALATA
Galata Tower
KARAKÖY
Jewish Museum
Karaköy
Galata Bridge
TOPKAPI
Fevzi Paşa Caddesi
Yavuz Selim Cad.
FATİH
Adnan Menderes Caddesi
Akşemsettin Cad.
KÜÇÜKPAZAR
Fatih Mosque
Akdeniz Cad.
Fevzi Paşa Caddesi
Atatürk Bulvarı
Süleymaniye Kulliyesi
Valens Aqueduct
Eminönü
Sirkeci
EMINÖNÜ
Sirkeci Station
Turgut Özal Caddesi
(Vatan Caddesi)
Arkeoloji Park
ŞEHZADEBAŞI
Şehzade Mosque
Şehzadebaşı Cad.
AKSARAY
İstanbul University
ÇAĞALOĞLU
Gülhane Park
MELVANKAPI
(Millet Cad.)
LALELI
Laleli Mosque
Ordu Cad.
BEYAZIT
Beyazıt Mosque
Yeniçeriler Cad.
Divan Yolu
Mustafa Kemal Bul.
Namık Kemal Cad.
Gedikpaşa Cad.
Museum of Turkish & Islamic Art
Blue Mosque
YENIKAPI
Türkeli Caddesi
Yenikapı
KUMKAPI
Kumkapı
SULTANAHMET
Kennedy Caddesi
Sea of Marmara
YENIKÖY
EYÜP
BEYOĞLU
GALATA
Bosphorus
ÜSKÜDAR
EMINÖNÜ
SEA OF MARMARA



Istanbul in 1 Day

1. Hippodrome
2. Topkapı Palace
3. Konyalı
4. Soğukçeşme Sokagı
5. Ayasofya
6. Yerebatan Sarnıçı
7. Blue Mosque
8. Grand Bazaar
9. Süleymaniye Kulliyesi
10. Süleymaniye Hamamı

Istanbul in 2 Days

1. St. Savior in Chora/ Kariye Müzesi
2. The Land Walls/Edirnekapı
3. Pierre Loti
4. Eyüp
5. Mısır Çarşısı (Egyptian Spice Bazaar)
6. Galata Bridge
7. Grilled fish on the quay
8. Mehter Band in the Military Museum
9. Taksim Square
10. Istiklal Caddesi
11. Çiçek Pasajı
12. Balıkpazarı

Istanbul in 3 Days

1. Balat & Fener
2. Istanbul Modern
3. Istanbul Modern Restaurant and Café
4. Dolmabahçe Palace
5. Ortaköy

costume of Ottoman storefronts, and in anticipation of sunset, a family-style carnival begins. See p. 134.

2 Topkapı Palace ★★★

The center of Ottoman might for almost 5 centuries, Topkapı Palace is a place of Oriental mystique, conjuring images of turbaned sultans and their harems, of paşas and eunuchs, and of an empire that wielded transcontinental influence at a time when the West was still living in the Dark Ages. The Treasury Room alone is enough to desensitize a woman to diamonds, rubies, and pearls. Try to get here when it opens, as the busloads descend by 9:30 or 10am. See p. 138.

> **3 K ONYALI ★**
> At the halfway mark of your visit to Topkapı Palace—the farthest courtyard from the entrance—rejuvenate yourself at the spectacularly sited and storied Konyalı Restaurant. See p. 103.

4 Sogukçeşme Sokagı

Take a walk through the typical, cobbled 19th-century Ottoman lane that runs parallel to the palace wall (to the right of the main gate of Topkapı Palace as you're leaving). This evocative and flowering mew passes a picturesque collection of Ottoman houses. Look closely, and you will see interesting juxtapositions of antiquity and relative modernity before the street slopes gently down behind the imposing backside of the Ayasofya. See p. 171.

5 Ayasofya ★★★

The crowning monument to the Byzantine Empire (and not to mention Justinian's reign) has endured for more than 1,000 years, serving Byzantine emperors and Ottoman sultans. Her very structure set the standard for all monumental Ottoman architecture that followed. It wasn't until recent years, after having had her interior whitewashed to create an acceptable prayer space for the Ottoman Muslim rulers, that her astonishing collection of gilded mosaic panels was once again exposed to daylight. See p. 124.

6 Yerebatan Sarnıcı ★★

Who'd have thought that the underbelly of a city could look so good? Hundreds of marble columns support soaring masonry arches, all theatrically alight to emphasize the gravitas, the mystery, and the beauty of what once served as the royal plumbing. See p. 152.

7 Blue Mosque ★★★

Named for the predominance of blue in the exquisite Iznik tiles, the mosque whose construction was ordered by Sultan Ahmet was designed to rival the Ayasofya in architectural glory. On weekend afternoons, you may see little mini-sultans parading around the grounds—these boys are celebrating the week preceding their circumcision rite. See p. 130.

8 Grand Bazaar ★★★

And now for the treat you've all been waiting for: the bazaar to end all bazaars—a veritable candy store of more than 3,600 shops, 24 *hans* (privately owned inns or marketplaces), 64 streets, 22 gates, 2 *bedestens* (covered markets), restaurants, mosques, fountains, and teahouses within an area of 31 hectares (76 acres). See p. 132.

9 Süleymaniye Camii ve Külliyesi ★★

Another masterpiece of the dream team of Süleyman the Magnificent and his chief architect, Sinan, this mosque complex was their crowning achievement. It is here that Sinan finally manages to out-dome the Ayasofya, but beyond this enormous feat of engineering, the mosque is perfectly sited, sitting atop the third of Istanbul's seven hills. There are commanding views

from the rear of the grounds that arrive well up to the Princes' Islands. You should get here before sunset to profit from the view. See p. 159.

⑩ Süleymaniye Hamamı ★

End this exhausting, and culture-filled day of exploration like a sultan. Indulge your senses at the adjacent Turkish bath, another architectural icon by the great Sinan, where an attendant will rub, scrub, and rinse away all of your cares. See p. 153.

3 THE BEST OF ISTANBUL IN 2 DAYS

On day 2 (having spent your first day following the 1-day itinerary), you'll have to work a little harder to cover the mosaic of Byzantine, Ottoman, and Republican sites scattered to the four corners of Istanbul. ***Start:*** *St. Savior in Chora/Kariye Müzesi.*

❶ St. Savior in Chora/Kariye Müzesi ★★★

Some of the finest late-Byzantine mosaics anywhere are on display in this former monastic church located in relative obscurity in a quiet neighborhood near the Theodosian Land Walls. The radiance of the shimmering mosaics seems to instill pride and wonder, particularly in a new class of visitors hailing from Eastern Europe. This church is also a tile in the modern-day custodial mosaic that is the Greek Orthodox Church. See p. 150.

❷ The Land Walls/Edirnekapı ★★

In A.D. 412, Theodosius began construction on a system of defensive battlements destined to protect the city for the next 1,000 years. Among the 188 towers spaced along a total length of 6,670m (4 miles) is the Edirne Gate, or Edirnekapı. This was the main point of entry into the city of Constantinople for Byzantine emperors and Ottoman sultans alike, the latter having also made their first triumphal entrance into the conquered city in 1453. The juxtaposition of the battlements against a series of quiet and traditional neighborhoods makes a visit here especially rewarding. See p. 202.

3 PIERRE LOTI

This nostalgic outpost recalls the time spent in Istanbul by literary giant Julien Viaud, a French national and protagonist of one of Istanbul's heart-rending legends. The cafe, which uses Viaud's pseudonym, is a simple and sparse tearoom and terrace offering romanticized views of the storied Golden Horn. See p. 157.

❹ Eyüp

The neighborhood of Eyüp commemorates the fall of Halid bin Zeyd Ebu Eyyûb (known as Eyüp Sultan), companion of Mohammad, in the Arab raids of the mid–7th century A.D. As Turkey's holiest Islamic site, the Eyüp Sultan mosque drew Ottoman sultans, paşas, and gentlemen here for official ceremonies, in pilgrimage, and as a prestigious final resting place. The cemetery along the lush path down from Pierre Loti serves as the latter, as does the grander *türbe,* or monumental mausoleums, closer to the mosque. The main plaza bustles with the comings and goings of the faithful, some of whom arrive from great distances, to honor their saint. On Sundays, chances are that you'll see some costumed little boys accompanied by their families visiting here prior to the boys' circumcision rite. See p. 156.

5 Mısır Çarşısı (Egyptian Spice Bazaar) ★★

Constructed as part of the Yeni Valide Mosque complex, the adjacent market is named for the exotic spices and essential grains brought into the city from Egypt. Inside is an irresistible and almost theatrical display of sights, sounds, and smells, but the best fun is in jostling your way through the streets behind the building. You will encounter vendors proffering morsels of soft cheese, spoonfuls of spicy *ezme,* and samples of succulent strawberries. See p. 210.

6 Galata Bridge

Next, a walk across the Galata Bridge will reward you with one of the best, all-encompassing views of the hills, minarets, and domes of the Old City behind you. You can either walk the upper deck, among fishermen and their catch, or stroll past the seafood restaurants and teahouses on the lower deck. Better still, switch between the two utilizing the stairways halfway, and don't forget to admire the churning juncture of the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus. See p. 7.

7 GRILLED FISH ON THE QUAY

This is the most authentic of daytime snacks, provided by a chain of fishing boats repurposed as Istanbul's version of fast food. The Tarıhı Eminönü Balıkçısı is the original; just walk right up to the water's edge and order a freshly grilled fish on a roll. See p. 108.

8 Mehter Concert ★★★ in the Military Museum ★★

As an empire of conquest, the Ottomans bequeathed a wealth of military memorabilia that tells the story of the empire's rise and fall. The Ottoman Mehter Band played advance guard to the Ottoman army of foot soldiers on military campaigns. The band's cacophonous, dissonant, and tympanic sounds are both terrifying and exciting. Its re-creation—in full Ottoman regalia—is not to be missed. See p. 157.

9 Taksim Square

The pulse of the city, if not the country, Taksim Square is a vibrant and vital center analogous to Times Square or Piccadilly Circus—except that here, centuries-old domes rise above Burger King billboards, and head-scarved girls on cellphones share the sidewalk with Istanbul's growing population of punk rockers. See p. 181.

10 Istiklal Caddesi

If Taksim is the heart of Istanbul, Istiklal Caddesi is the coronary artery. This, now an emerging open-air shopping mall flanked on both sides by ornately constructed former foreign embassies, recalls its earlier incarnation as the 19th-century Grand Rue de Pera. The evening crowd gets crushing, as laborers rush home for dinner and revelers seek out the trendiest nightspots. Continue down along Istiklal Caddesi or take the Nostalgic Tramway.

11 Çiçek Pasajı

Halfway down Istiklal is a rococo arcade dressed in beer halls, fish restaurants, and hanging gardens of flowers. It's one of Istanbul's most touristed attractions, and rightfully so. See p. 178.

12 Balıkpazarı

The adjacent arcades and alleys that make up the Galatasaray Fish Market are picturesque, historic, and alluring. In the main avenue, displays of fresh fish vie for the attention of potential diners, until the street-side dining action begins on the narrow and cobbled offshoot of Nevişade Sokağı. Poke among the souvenirs, antiques, and luxuriant textiles for sale in the Avrupa Pasajı, before calling it a day well spent and relaxing over a meal at one of the classic *meyhanes* (taverns) or restaurants recommended in the Beyoğlu section of the dining chapter. See p. 178.

4 THE BEST OF ISTANBUL IN 3 DAYS

With 3 days at your disposal (having spent your first 2 days following the 2-day itinerary), you have the luxury on day 3 of stopping to smell the roses, figuratively speaking. After 2 days of manic exploration, it's time to poke your nose into the lesser-visited nooks and crannies that make Istanbul as complex and captivating as it is. ***Start:*** *Ecumenical Patriarchate, Fener.*

❶ Balat & Fener

The contiguous neighborhoods of Balat and Fener encompass authentic and timeless streets whose time is fast running out. The entirety of these two neighborhoods—a skeletal landscape of the former Jewish, Greek, Armenian, and Ottoman communities that resided here—has been identified as a restoration zone, and a patchwork of projects is either completed or underway. Dotting the streets are Byzantine-era basilicas interspersed between crumbling ancient ruins, stately merchant-class town houses, and the odd goat. I recommend that, for an abbreviated tour, you follow Walking Tour 2 in reverse from the Ecumenical Patriarchate until you arrive at the Balat Market. See p. 175.

❷ Istanbul Modern ★

After 2 days chock-full of antiquity, the very contemporary Istanbul Modern provides a gentle reminder that this city is a contemporary international player. Fascinating portraits, landscapes, and multimedia exhibits are illustrative interpretations of a culture in transition between traditional Ottoman and Republican Turkey. See p. 168.

3 İSTANBUL MODERN RESTAURANT AND CAFÉ

Although not individually listed in this guide as a destination restaurant, the museum restaurant, which gets fantastic views of Topkapı Palace, serves a sophisticated selection of Turkish and international dishes at reasonable prices. It's open Monday to Saturday 10am to midnight and Sunday 10am to 6pm.

❹ Dolmabahçe Palace ★

Lavish in its ornamental European architecture and sumptuous interior decor, Dolmabahçe Palace represents the later Ottoman sultans' desire to replicate all things modern and Western. The palace proper sits on 25 hectares (62 acres) of landfill and is made up of 285 rooms, 46 salons, 1,427 windows, and 68 toilets. See p. 162.

❺ Ortaköy ★

The modern and trendy seaside village of Ortaköy is Istanbul's uptown location with the downtown feel. Its labyrinth of cobbled alleys converges on a picturesque waterside quay, where you'll find restaurants, cafes, boutiques, and sidewalk vendors hawking everything from accessories to scarves to a hefty assortment of wigs—the compromise of choice for headscarf-wearing female students who aspire to attend state-run universities. See p. 62.

5

Where to Stay

In the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, visitors could choose among a sparsely populated category of hotels that included decrepit aging blocks, guesthouses with dubiously reliable electricity and plumbing, and the rare restored standout. Prices remained criminally low, as all but the most coveted rooms (such as those in the Four Seasons) sat vacant. But what a long way Istanbul has come lately. With tourism numbers soaring and room rates skyrocketing, hotels are popping up like mushrooms, while older properties are turning up again like shiny new pennies. Now you can expect solidly progressive and decidedly competitive amenities that more often than not include Wi-Fi, plasma TVs hooked up to satellite connections, and free airport transfers. It's also rare these days (but not altogether unheard of) that your morning shower runs cold or that the backup generator fails in a blackout. In spite of the hotel build-in-Istanbul or bust mentality, the city is experiencing something it hasn't before: full occupancy. For a discussion on the types of hotels and rooms in Istanbul, as well as advice for booking a room, see "Tips on Accommodations," in chapter 3.

1 BEST HOTEL BETS

For a quick overview of the city's best one-of-a-kind places to stay, see p. 7.

- **Best Place to Pretend You're a Sultan:** No expense was spared in restoring the rooms in the Palace Section of the **Çırağan Palace,** Çırağan Cad. 84 (✆ **0212/258-3377;** www.kempinski-istanbul.com), from the finest upholstery, to gold bathroom fittings, to the sumptuously detailed Sultan's Hamam (open for private events only). Rebuilt from the ground up is the lavish retreat that is **Les Ottomans,** Muallim Naci Cad. 68, Kuruçeşme (✆ **0212/359-1500;** www.lesottomans.com). If Muhzinzade Mehmet Paşa himself were to step into his former residence today, he would feel like he had gotten a promotion. See p. 90 and 91, respectively.
- **Best Views from in Bed:** Honeymooners can make the most of the ample Bosphorus views at **A'jia,** Ahmet Rasim Paşa Yalısı, Çubuklu Cad. 27, Kanlıca (✆ **0216/413-9300;** www.ajiahotel.com), where plush beds face picture windows. The Mezzanine Suite throws in a panoramic view from the bathtub as well. From both the bed and bathtub in the suites of the **Ottoman Imperial,** Caferiye Sok. 6/1, Sultanahmet (✆ **0212/513-6150;** www.ottomanhotelimperial.com), you can practically touch the windows in the dome of the Ayasofya. See p. 92 and 74, respectively.
- **Best Nostalgic Hotel:** After a 4-year project of restoration, rehab, and upgrades by expert architects, preservationists, and academics, Istanbul's iconic **Pera Palace Hotel,** Meşrutiyet Cad. 98–100, Tepebaşı (✆ **0212/251-4560;** www.perapalace.com), has been restored to its thrown as the jewel in the crown of this former capital of three empires. See p. 85.

- **Best Trendy Hotel:** How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice. How do you get into Istanbul's trendiest hotel? Book a room at the **W Istanbul,** Süleyman Seba Cad. 27, 34357 Beşiktaş (✆ **0212/381-2121;** www.wistanbul.com.tr), with its nightclub-esque ambience and seductive lighting. An oasis of style and guiltless indulgence is the **Mısafır Suites,** Gazeteci Erol Dernek Sok. 1, Beyoğlu (✆ **0212/249-8930;** www.misafirsuites.com), with rooms decked out like the luxury downtown studio you wish you had. See p. 91 and 82, respectively.
- **Best Bang for Your Buck:** Both the **Cihangir Hotel,** Aslan Yatağı Sok. 17, Cihangir (✆ **0212/251-5317;** www.cihangirhotel.com), and the **Apricot Hotel,** Amiral Tafdil Sok. 18/2, Sultanahmet (✆ **0212/638-1658;** www.apricothotel.com), tie for the best value. The former offers affordable Bosphorus views, while the latter provides the warmth and scale of a bed-and-breakfast in a quiet, historic corner of the Old City. See p. 85 and 75, respectively.
- **Best Hotel Restoration:** The architects and owners of the **Sumahan,** Kuleli Cad. 51, Çengelköy (✆ **0216/422-8000;** www.sumahan.com), whose name recalls the property's original use (a grain alcohol distillery), swathed the former factory in marble and updated it without sacrificing arched windows, the distinctive chimney, its industrial feel, or a sense of indulgence. Similarly, the **Four Seasons Sultanahmet,** Tevkifhane Sok. 1 (✆ **0212/381-3000;** www.fourseasons.com) transformed a forgotten 19th-century political prison into some of the most evocative and coveted rooms in the city. See p. 93 and 72, respectively.
- **Best Unique Hotel:** With the density of fabulous hotels setting the bar in Istanbul ever higher, it's more difficult than ever to find something, well, *different.* The stylish **Five Boutique Hotel,** Cumhuriyet Cad. Prof. Celal Öker Sok. 5, Harbiye (✆ **0212/296-5553;** www.fiveboutiquehotel.com), has the appealing trait of being entirely, from the bedclothes to the breakfast table, 100% organic. Two hotels in Sultanahmet earn honorable mention for having a portion of the hotel built into the city's ancient, Byzantine walls. They are the meandering **Empress Zoe,** Akbıyık Cad., Adliye Sok. 10, Sultanahmet (✆ **0212/518-2504;** www.emzoe.com), and **Naz Wooden House,** Akbıyık Cad., Degirmeni Sok. 7, Sultanahmet (✆ **0212/516-7130;** www.nazwoodenhouseinn.com). See p. 90, 77, and 79, respectively.

2 CHOOSING A NEIGHBORHOOD

For someone new to the sprawling mass that is Istanbul, one of the first questions to ask is "where's a good place to set up base camp?" I used to unreservedly direct my readers to the historic bulls-eye that is **Sultanahmet,** where old dilapidated homes converted into "Special Category" hotels created the perfect gateway to an authentic past. But three very important developments in the past few years have caused me to change my mind.

First, because of unrelenting demand, hotels—the majority of which are run by people with absolutely no experience in hospitality—formerly charging US$20 for a room now charge 150€ and up, for absolutely no added value. Let me put this into perspective: The luxury five-star **Ceylan Inter-Continental** (p. 81) has advance purchase Internet rates from 120€ *with a Bosphorus view.* Second, given the enormous profit margins that a hotel can bring in, it seems as if everyone has gotten in on the act—transforming what was a market of family-run houses into a sea of mass-produced, soulless "boutique hotels."

Finally, and most disappointingly, the hassling by carpet salesmen and their ilk has reached new levels; one time several hotel guests I encountered opted for the safety of the hotel lobby rather than brave the irritating and stressful storm of harassment by salesmen flooding the streets of the tourist areas. It is therefore with a heavy heart that I recommend this neighborhood only with the admonition to stay vigilant (for formal and informal crime), or just roll with it. (For short stays of 2 days or so, I guess I just recommend that you bite the bullet.)

The good alternative is to base yourself in **Beyoğlu,** where hotels are managed by people schooled in hotel management (and not carpet sales), and the food and nightlife are better anyway. Plus, with the new, efficient transport system connecting Taksim and Sultanahmet, you can spend the day wandering around the Old City, and in under 20 minutes, be back in time for a decent meal.

3 THE HISTORIC PENINSULA

IN & AROUND SULTANAHMET

Very Expensive

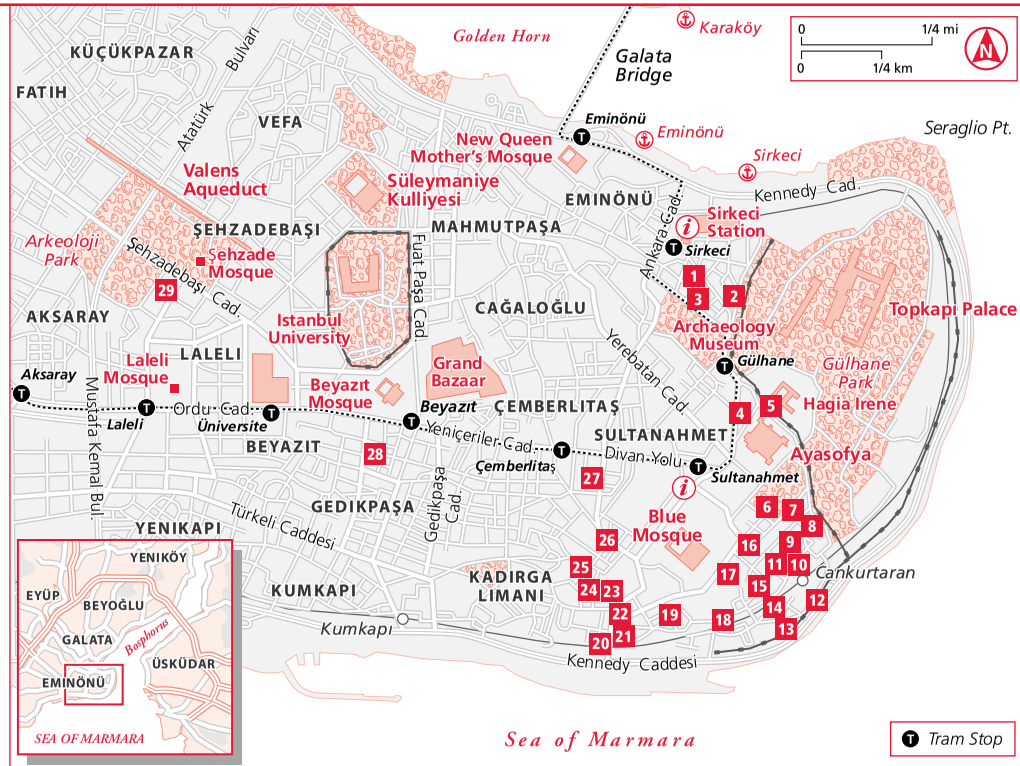
Four Seasons Sultanahmet ★★★ This Turkish neoclassical building located in the heart of Sultanahmet was originally a dilapidated prison for political dissidents. Much of the original marble and tile were retained and recycled into the hotel's present-day, five-star interior design. Rooms have plush furniture purchased from local vendors; the architect even stayed true to tradition by applying paint as they did in the Ottoman palaces—with a spatula. The opulent and luxurious bathrooms, all with separate toilet cabin, present a formidable amount of competition for time spent sightseeing, and the king-size beds are amazingly comfy. Plus, almost all of the rooms have views of something fabulous. Bonus: Guests may use the considerable amenities of the **Four Seasons Bosphorus** (p. 91); and it is even possible to divide your stay among the two—the staff will pack up your room and lay it out in the new space precisely where you left it.

Tevkifhane Sok. 1, 34110 Sultanahmet. ✆ **800/332-3442** in the U.S., or 0212/381-4000 operator in Turkey. Direct line to hotel ✆ 0212/381-3000. Fax 0212/381-4100. www.fourseasons.com. 65 units. 340€–1,160€ double and suite; B&B rates higher. All rates lower Nov–Mar. AE, DC, MC, V. Free valet and limited on-street parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant (p. 103); 2 bars; airport transfers (65€); concierge; health club and spa; room service; smoke-free rooms. In room: A/C, satellite TV, CD player, fax (on request), hair dryer, Internet, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Expensive

Avicenna ★★ Perched on one of the high points of Sultanahmet overlooking the as-of-yet unreclaimed section of Cankurtaran with the Marmara Sea in the distance, the three-story, 19th-century Avicenna (no elevator) makes it hard to believe that this isn't the Mediterranean portion of your vacation. Preservationists restored three forgotten wooden Ottoman buildings and connected them with a covered wooden trellised walkway above a tranquil garden. Stained-glass dormer windows are part of the view from within the rooftop bar, decorated with outstanding Iznik tile replicas inset into original decorative wall molding. The entire hotel underwent a complete overhaul in 2008, sprucing up once-worn rooms with all of the comforts of a 100-year-old-plus home with the added conveniences of the 21st century, complete with shiny parquet floors and sleek, modern bathrooms. Book a suite and you'll get a room with a balcony, Marmara Sea breezes at no extra charge.

- Apricot Hotel **15**
- Arena Hotel **25**
- Aruna Hotel **13**
- Avicenna **14**
- Ayasofya Konakları **5**
- Celal Ağa Konağı **29**
- Deniz Konak **20**
- Dersaadet Oteli **19**
- Eresin Crown Hotel **22**
- Fehmi Bey **26**
- Four Seasons Sultanahmet **6**
- Hotel Alp **8**
- Hotel Armada **12**
- Hotel Ayasofya **24**
- Hotel Empress Zoe **7**
- Hotel Erguvan **23**
- Hotel Niles **28**
- Mavi Ev (Blue House) **16**
- Naz Wooden House **18**
- Ottoman Imperial **4**
- Poem **10**
- Sapphire **1**
- Sarı Konak **11**
- Sirkeci Konak **2**
- Sude Konak **3**
- Sultan's Inn **21**
- Sultanahmet Palace Hotel **17**
- Sultanhan Hotel **27**
- Zeugma Hotel **9**



Amiral Tafdil Sok. 31–33, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/517-0550.** Fax 0212/516-6555. www.avicennahotel.com. 48 units. 240€ double; 350€ suite. AE, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Eresin Crown Hotel ★★ While excavating the foundation to build the Eresin, workers uncovered Byzantine floor mosaics, marble columns, and a cistern, artifacts later identified as belonging to the women's quarters of Justinian's Great Palace. Altogether, the hotel recovered, registered, and now exhibits 49 historically significant museum pieces dating to the Hellenistic and Byzantine times, giving this hotel a "boutique museum" quality. Rooms in this quality hotel are well appointed, with bonus touches like window seats, plaster friezes, and Jacuzzis. Its enormous rooftop terrace has one of the most magnificent panoramic views of Old City in Sultanahmet.

Küçük Ayasofya Cad. 40, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/638-4428.** Fax 0212/638-0933. www.eresinsultanahmet.com.tr. 59 units. 185€–325€ double; 250€–415€ suite. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; airport transfer (65€); concierge; Wi-Fi. *In room:* A/C, satellite and cable TV, minibar.

Mavi Ev (Blue House) ★ If the Blue House weren't actually painted blue, one would think the name came from the fact that the hotel is practically attached at the hip to the Blue Mosque. This hotel is a fine example of modern Turkish elegance, with its tile floors, carpets, stained glass, and understated details. Most of the rooms have stall showers, while suites have Jacuzzis. The rooftop restaurant (and bar; summers only) is especially noteworthy, if not for the food, then for the backdoor viewing of the sound-and-light displays above the Blue Mosque. The entire effect is enchanting, and you couldn't get a better view of the domes if you were standing right on top of them.

Dalbastı Sok. 14, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/638-9010.** Fax 0212/638-9017. www.bluehouse.com.tr. 26 units. Mar 15–Nov 10 160€ double, 220€ suite. Double rates lower in winter. MC, V. Public parking across the street. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Ottoman Imperial ★★ If it's a central location you're looking for, you can't do much better than this without compromising on quality. Located opposite the Ayasofya, the building was originally a dormitory for students of the adjacent Caferağa Medresi, then converted to a hospital, and in 1972, slapped together as a hostel. The conversion of the building to the Ottoman Imperial does it proud, allowing the hotel to join the list of true, Ottoman-influenced boutique hotels. Room size varies, from compact "Superior Vezir and Sultan" standard rooms, to the more comfortable suites, to imperial suites (the "Premium Vezir" rooms). Or go for broke and book the supremely sublime Sultan's suite—with the bathtub adjacent to the bed on one side and the domes of the Ayasofya on the other. The bathrooms, outfitted with albeit new European sit-in bathtubs, are a bit tight. Behind the hotel is an unexpected garden patio restaurant that sits above the undulating domes of the *medresi.*

Caferiye Sok. 6/1, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/513-6150.** Fax 0212/512-7628. www.ottomanhotelimperial.com. 50 units. 120€–240€ double; 320€–360€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; free airport transfer (one-way) for stays of 3 days or more; concierge; room service; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Sultanahmet Palace Hotel ★ Moments You either love this one or hate it. That's because in all of the deluxe rooms, each small bathroom doubles as a marble-clad mini-*hamam.* (No tubs; shower heads are provided for convenience. Sadly, a glitch in the heating system prevents the *hamams* from producing any heat.) Most of the rooms on the third (top) floor are disappointingly small, so when reserving, try to nab a second-floor (first-floor) room (preferably facing the Blue Mosque) or one of the two new deluxe

top-floor rooms (nos. 309 and 310) decked out with modern bathrooms and Jacuzzis. (Large-size visitors and creatures of habit used to enclosed showers or bathtubs might want to think twice before booking this hotel.) The hotel was designed as a garden villa, with Byzantine-style hand-carved moldings above Roman terra-cotta flooring, a grand marble central staircase, courtyards and terrace fountains, and breathtaking views in summer of the Marmara Sea from the breakfast terrace.

Torun Sok. 19, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/458-0460.** Fax 0212/518-6224. www.sultanahmetpalace.com. 36 units. 150€ double; 210€ suite. Rates are for minimum of 2 nights. AE, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; free airport transfer with 2 nights minimum stay; room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Sultanhan Hotel ★★ Muted echoes of guests' comings and goings bounce off the marble walls of the lobby of this higher-end hotel located a stone's throw from the Grand Bazaar and Çemberlitaş tramway. The rooms are larger than what you might find at one of the many neighborhood "boutique hotels," ensuring that the enormous (55 in.) cable TVs don't overwhelm the space. Some of the fancier rooms have sculpted entry archways and bathtubs (rather than showers), and the concierge can furnish you with a laptop to make use of the free in-room Wi-Fi. The hotel also has one of the most spectacular rooftop views in all of the historic peninsula, offering a completely unobstructed panorama of both the Blue Mosque and the Hagia Sofia *simultaneously.*

Piyer Loti Cad. 15, 34122 Çemberlitaş. ✆ **0212/516-3232.** Fax 0212/516-5995. www.sultanhanhotel.com. 40 units. 230€ double. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; *hamam* (full service 80€); room service; sauna; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, cable TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Moderate

Apricot Hotel ★ Finds Value Because of a contract glitch, the Apricot was forced to move from its original location to an even more charming building on a parallel street. Although there are fewer rooms, they are prettier, larger, and better appointed. Indeed, the Apricot's owner, Hakan, has created the perfect example of why inexpensive doesn't have to mean cheap. The building provides an exclusive, stylish, and homey atmosphere at competitive (and fixed) prices with amenities such as Jacuzzis (in two rooms), *hamams* (two other rooms), and balconies (three rooms). With only six rooms, you'd better call now.

Amiral Tafdil Sok. 18/2, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/638-1658.** Fax 0212/458-3574. www.apricothotel.com. 6 units. Mar–Nov 15 79€–99€. Rates higher Easter and May; rates lower other times. MC, V (add 5% for payment by credit card). No traveler's checks. **Amenities:** Airport transfer (25€ or free for stays of 3 nights or more). *In room:* A/C, cable TV, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Arena Hotel ★ This three-story hotel located in an unpolished corner of Sultanahmet just steps behind the Hippodrome occupies a restored Ottoman house that has remained in the same family for more than 80 years. The owner has retained traditional touches such as family heirloom furnishings and "grandmother Gül's caftan" in the lobby's salon. Rooms feature charming Ottoman-style decor, wood floors, and classic Turkish rugs, but the rickety stall showers (reminiscent of two-star pensions I've stayed at in Rome) indicate that the bathrooms need updating. There are two suites, each with a balcony, the only two tubs in the house, and flatscreen TVs. Better yet, the basement level has a little *hamam* (reservations required).

Küçük Ayasofya Cad., Şehit Mehmet Paşa Yokuşu Üçler Hamam Sok. 13–15, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/458-0364.** Fax 0212/458-0366. www.arenahotel.com. 27 units. Mar–June 119€ double; 139€–159€ suite. Rates higher July–Aug; lower other months. Special Internet promotions according to availability. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Limited street parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; *hamam* (10€); room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Aruna Hotel ★ The newly built Hotel Aruna, a second venture of the same owner of the Hotel Kybele (recommended but forever fully booked; www.kybelehotel.com), in Ahırkapı, was constructed to fit in with the neighborhood's other traditional wooden Ottoman houses. The three floors have a decor that is modern yet elegant with a Turkish flourish. Some rooms have a Jacuzzi, while others come equipped with a modern take on the traditional Turkish *hamam* (with a marble basin in the shower).

Cankurtaran Mah., Ahırkapı Sok. 74, 34122 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/458-5488.** Fax 0212/458-5413. www.arunahotel.com. 16 units. 110€ double; 180€ suite. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Ayasofya Konakları ★ Moments In the 1980s, the State-run Turkish Touring and Automobile Club set off a craze for historic preservation when it restored a handful of clapboard Ottoman mansions on the historic, cobblestoned Soğukçeşme Street. Back then, the collection of pension-style rooms saw a veritable stampede of illustrious visitors, including Bernardo Bertolucci and Roman Polanski, and in 2000, Sofia, the queen of Spain. The rooms are best described as being at the high end of shabby chic, and many (but not all) now benefit from a number of additional comforts (including air-conditioning and TV). Book early enough, and you'll score a street-side room with a view of the Ayasofya. The *konakları,* or collection of houses, also enjoys one of the city's most characteristic settings, sandwiched between the imperial outer wall of Topkapı Palace and the Ayasofya. The area also encompasses open-air garden and terrace cafes, and an expansive garden that surrounds a wonderful *orangerie.*

Soğukçeşme Sok., 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/513-3660.** Fax 0212/514-0213. www.ayasofyapensions.com. 63 units. 119€ double at rear; 140€ double street-side; 245€ suite. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; room service. *In room:* A/C.

Deniz Konak This hotel set on the cliff above the old palace defensive walls is owned by the same people who run the Naz Wooden House (see below) and the Sultan's Inn (see below). All are small and charming, bed-and-breakfast–type places with various pros and cons. The main attraction of the Deniz Konak is the breathtaking views of the Marmara Sea. Each of the rooms facing the sea has a small bonus balcony, for 20€ extra. Guests have the option of taking breakfast at the Sultan's Inn across the street, which was actually a bit more ample than the one at the Deniz Konak when I visited. All of the major sites are in walking distance (mostly up gentle slopes) with the tramway a good 10 minutes away (longer if you stop to shop).

Küçük Ayasofya Cad., Çayıroğlu Sok. 14, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/518-9595.** Fax 0212/638-3922. www.denizkonakhotel.com. 15 units. 89€ double. Add 21€ for room with view. MC, V. **Amenities:** Airport transfer (20€). *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar.

Dersaadet Oteli ★ In Turkish, Dersaadet means "place of felicity and beauty"—an appropriate designation for this handsome hotel fashioned in the style of a 19th-century Ottoman house. The parquet floors and the deep wooden details lend a grace to the simplicity of the rooms, most of which have a view of the Marmara Sea and Asian side. A few of the bathrooms have showers and sinks jerry-rigged into the original small spaces, but all units are different, so ask ahead what to expect, or go for broke and simply opt for the sublime and honeymoon-worthy Sultan's Penthouse Suite. The rooftop terrace offers stunning views of the Blue Mosque and Marmara Sea.

Kapıağası Sok. 5, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/458-0760.** Fax 0212/518-4918. www.dersaadethotel.com. 17 units. Mar–July and Sept–Nov 115€ double; off season 80€–115€ double; 140€–270€ suite. Rates higher Dec 23–Jan 3. MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Fehmi Bey (Kids) With so much "boutique hotel" competition in the neighborhood these days, it's only because Fehmi Bey recently renovated its rooms that I decided to give it a second look. Now, rooms are much better aesthetically, with upgraded bathrooms and polished original wooden floors. But except for a handful of extraordinarily large rooms, most are claustrophobic, making me question the value of this hotel in a season of high demand. I suggest booking one of the three deluxe corner rooms (nos. 103, 203, and 303), which have equally ample bathrooms. A "family room" is actually two rooms, one of which has a foldout sofa bed for kids. Otherwise, you can't beat the location (steps from everything), plus the hotel offers the added bonus of a sauna and business center. As almost all hotels in the neighborhood, this one also has an incredible rooftop terrace, and there's also a nice little garden.

Ucler Sok. 15, 33340 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/638-9083.** Fax 0212/518-1264. www.fehmibey.com. 27 units. 90€ double; 100€–130€ suite. Rates lower off season. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Rooftop restaurant (summers only); bar; free airport transfer (one-way) for stays of 3 days or more; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Hotel Armada Located on the outer edges of Sultanahmet in Cankurtaran near the Ahırkapı Gate, the Hotel Armada is a true four-star hotel with extras like an expansive lobby cafe, meeting rooms, a penthouse atrium restaurant, and one of the best rooftop terraces in the neighborhood. Superior and deluxe rooms are the result of a 2009 upgrade, featuring antique carpets on parquet floors, and newly renovated marble bathrooms with rain showers. (Standard rooms are small but more than functional, with a negligible amount of wear and tear around the edges.) The charming fringe neighborhood retains a bit of a village character, but those who decide to stay here should realize that it's an uphill 5- to 10-minute or so walk to all major sights. Weekend guests may want to request a room away from the evening entertainment to insulate themselves from the late-night echoes through the marble staircases.

Ahırkapı Sok. (just behind the Cankurtaran train station), 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/638-1370.** Fax 0212/518-5060. www.armadahotel.com.tr. 108 units. 75€ double; 90€ superior; 150€ suite. Rates do not include VAT. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; concierge; room service; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Hotel Ayasofya (Value) (Kids) After 29 years in business, at the end of which all I could muster was that the hotel was "unoffensive and cheap," the Hotel Ayasofya has been taken over by Australian-born Gay Reeves, who has whipped this place into more than respectable shape. Parquet floors have been installed in all rooms, where an eclectic mix of modern Turkish and traditional Ottoman prevails. Standard rooms are relatively small but clean, and as you move up the food chain of room types, spaces get expectantly larger. There are also three adjunct apartments for families or long stays, all sleeping four to five people and all with sea views.

Küçük Ayasofya Cad., Demirci Reşit Sok. 28, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/516-9446.** Fax 0212/518-0700. www.ayasofyahotel.com. 25 units. Mar 16–Nov 4 79€–99€ double, 150€ suite and apartments. Rates lower off season. See website for promotions. MC, V. **Amenities:** Garden bar; free airport transfer for stays of 3 nights or more; room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Hotel Empress Zoe ★★ (Moments) Empress Zoe overlooks (and indeed, is attached to) the crumbling remnants of the oldest *hamam* in the city. Access to the majority of rooms is via a narrow circular iron staircase—good to know if traveling light wasn't on this trip's agenda. If you do strain your back on the way up, you'll be pleased to find extremely comfortable beds and loads of character when you make it to your room.

Rooms all have showers, and only the larger suites have (cable) TV. The hotel combines five separate houses, and rooms range from charming doubles with Byzantine or Anatolian-style murals, to a variety of garden and penthouse suites. Because of the configuration, secluded courtyards and panoramic terraces unexpectedly appear around almost every corner. The rooftop bar is warmly draped in deeply colored Turkish *kilims* and blankets, and there's a fireplace for those crisp winter evenings.

Akbıyık Cad., Adliye Sok. 10, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/518-2504.** Fax 0212/518-5699. www.emzoe.com. 26 units. 110€–135€ double; 125€–240€ suite. MC, V. **Amenities:** 3 bars; airport transfer (25€); smoke-free rooms; Wi-Fi. *In room:* A/C, hair dryer.

Hotel Erguvan ★ A front-row seat to the Spherion (the ancient retaining wall of the Hippodrome), a stellar location down the steeply sloping cobbled street behind the Hippodrome, and helpful staff are the main draws of the Erguvan. As with most hotels in Sultanahmet, the rooftop breakfast room opens up to amazing views over the Old City. Half of the rooms have bathtubs, which is a rarity on this side of town, and every window in the place is double-glazed, whether it needs it or not. The manager made a point of mentioning that the building was reconstructed in compliance with Istanbul's new earthquake code, a fact I'm not sure made me feel better. Pay an additional 15€ and you'll get a sea-view room.

Aksakal Cad. 3, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/458-2784.** Fax 0212/458-2788. www.erguvanhotelistanbul.com. 22 units. 90€ double. MC, V. **Amenities:** Rooftop restaurant and bar (summer only); free airport transfer for stays of 3 days or longer; room service. *In room:* A/C, cable TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Sarı Konak ★★ (Finds) It's easy to see why visitors choose to stay in this small family-run establishment. Bahattin and his son Umit roll out the red carpet for everyone. The rooms are charming and very homey, and some even have little cushioned window seats. The main difference between the room types is the size, but even the smallest standard double is larger than standard at the Ottoman Imperial or the Sultanahmet Palace. The rooftop terrace, even without the choice views of the Blue Mosque and the Marmara Sea, is spectacular, partially shaded under a timber roof and with inviting cushions to relax on. Downstairs, breakfast is served to the soothing trickle of the garden fountain against the backdrop of an ancient Byzantine wall. The building next door was recently renovated into a multiroom, apartment-style annex (these are the suites), offering the opportunity for a real "local" experience.

Mimar Mehmet Ağa Cad. 42–46, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/638-6258.** Fax 0212/517-8635. www.sarikonak.com. 17 units. Mar–Nov 99€–139€ double, 179€–279€ suite. Rates lower off season. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Bar; airport transfer (25€); room service; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi.

Zeugma Hotel The theme at this small, mid-range boutique hotel housed in a restored 19th-century Ottoman house is ancient Rome, with reproductions of mosaics discovered at the site of Zeugma decorating the walls. The best rooms are the deluxe ones on the top floor, as they get the sea views and Jacuzzis; otherwise, all the rooms are essentially the same—clean, bright, and functional, with cabin showers and parquet flooring. Windows are double-glazed to keep out the sounds of nighttime revelers across the street, but I'd play it safe and reserve a room in the back.

Akbıyık Cad. 35, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/517-4040.** Fax 0212/516-4333. www.zeugmahotel.com. 10 units. 80€ double; 120€ deluxe. DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Free airport transfer for stays of 3 nights or more; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Inexpensive

Hotel Alp Value This new guesthouse, comprised of four floors (no elevator) and a panoramic rooftop terrace, opened in March 2009, after an interior overhaul and a complete face-lift that included the owners slapping an Ottoman-style wooden facade over the lifeless cement block that was there before. Glass-enclosed stall showers are of unusually solid quality for a hotel of this class, although the grouting could be attended to a bit more thoroughly. There's a little room with a tiny sliver of a courtyard for the price of a double, while the "family room" with two double beds makes an easy triple or quad for 100€—a good budget option for couples traveling with or without children.

Akbıyık Cad. Adliye Sok. 4, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/517-7067.** www.alpguesthouse.com. 70€ double. MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

Naz Wooden House For anyone interested in sleeping in a room all wrapped up in the history of Byzantium, this is the place. The hotel is built directly into the ancient city walls, so chances are you'll be ducking under a Roman archway or sleeping under an expansive brick vault. Spaces are commensurately small and showers are of the closed sliding stall variety, but it's all very charming and historic. When Naz is booked up (there are only seven rooms, after all), the management encourages you to stay at one of their sister properties, the **Deniz Konak** (p. 76) or the **Sultan's Inn** (see below).

Akbıyık Degirmeni Sok. 7, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/516-7130.** Fax 0212/518-5453. www.nazwoodenhouseinn.com. 7 units. 70€ double. MC, V. **Amenities:** Rooftop bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar.

Poem On a quiet back street of Sultanahmet, a safe distance from the noisy Australian backpackers on Akbıyık Street, is this sincerely friendly, inviting, and relatively low-budget hidden pension. Two small adjacent buildings combine to hide a leafy terrace overlooking the disheveled courtyard of the neighboring property while simultaneously providing the rooftop platform on which to enjoy sunset views over the sea. Standard rooms, all of which take the names of Turkish poems, are tiny and spartan, while the two suites are slightly larger (the "All of a Sudden" suite has a balcony and views of the Marmara Sea).

Akbıyık Cad., Terbıyık Sok. 12, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/638-9744.** www.hotelpoem.com. 16 units. 70€ double; 130€ suite (250€ suite with Bosphorus view). MC, V. **Amenities:** Wi-Fi. *In room:* A/C, hair dryer.

Sultan's Inn This little hotel, a sister property of the Deniz Konak and Naz Wooden House (both above), is basic without being dull. Sparely decorated rooms nevertheless have Turkish touches, and all rooms have modern bathrooms with showers. The rooftop terrace garden benefits from panoramic views of the Marmara Sea, the Blue Mosque, and the Kücük Ayasofya Mosque, just a stone's throw away.

Kücük Ayasofya Sok., Mustafapaşa Sok. 50, 34400 Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/638-2562.** Fax 0212/518-5453. www.sultansinn.com. 17 units. 40€–80€ double. MC, V. **Amenities:** Bar; airport transfer (20€); room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

BEYAZIT & THE GRAND BAZAAR AREA

Expensive

Celal A ğa K onağı ★ Attached to the newly renovated, 500-year-old Celal Ağa Hamam is the newly constructed, stately Celal Ağa Konağı, a decidedly Turkish, luxurious pseudo-boutique hotel where no detail has been left to chance. All of the generously sized rooms come equipped with Tempur-Pedic mattresses, goose-down duvets, fireplaces (!),

and silk upholstery. Bathrooms are equally spacious and have Jacuzzis, silk towels, and the item no civilized man or woman should be without: a remote-controlled bidet. The hotel's amenities—indoor and outdoor pools, wellness spa, historic *hamam*—make this an attractive base of operations for tour groups. Meanwhile, the location—sandwiched among the untouristy Istanbul University buildings, the Şehedbaşı Mosque, and Süleymaniye—makes this hotel a charismatic outpost for the intrepid.

Şehzadebaşı Cad. 5/7, 34130 Balabanağa Mah. (just west of Beyazıt Camii). ✆ **0212/519-0909.** www.celalagakonagihotel.com. 87 units. 160€ double. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfer (35€ or free for stays of 2 nights or more); concierge; exercise room; *hamam*; indoor and outdoor pools; room service; smoke-free rooms; spa. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, fax, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Moderate

Hotel Niles ★ This sister hotel to the **Dersaadet Oteli** (p. 76) is located in a working neighborhood a 3-minute walk from the Beyazıt transportation hub and the Grand Bazaar. Though the two hotels are very different—Dersaadet is more of a historic inn, while the Hotel Niles is your standard tourist hotel—you get the same meticulous and friendly level of service. Hotel Niles provides the basics: a clean room, a clean shower, a knowledgeable staff, a roof terrace with a view of the Marmara Sea, and a generous breakfast spread. The rooms are big enough to fit their beds and not much else, but after hours of haggling in the Grand Bazaar, what more do you need? Considering that a double room is as low as 50€, and that you'll likely gorge yourself on homemade Turkish breads and *börek* for breakfast, this place is a bargain.

Ordu Cad., Dibekli Cami Sok. 19, 34410 Beyazıt. ✆ **212/517-3239.** Fax 212/517-0732. www.hotelniles.com. 29 units. Sept–Nov 75€ double; as low as 50€ other months. MC, V. **Amenities:** Rooftop terrace; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

SIRKECI

Moderate

Sirkeci Konak ★ With prices going through the roof for rooms in Sultanahmet, it was really just a matter of time before the Sirkeci neighborhood became fashionable. One of the more charming additions to the neighborhood is the Sirkeci Konak, occupying a traditional clapboard reproduction around the corner from its older sister property, the **Orient Express Hotel** (✆ **0212/520-7161;** www.orientexpresshotel.com). Although still a reasonable option, by comparison the Konak gets all *A*s for effort and implementation. The Ottoman interiors go well beyond the usual sateen bedspread (the ones here are textured in velvet) to lend a more oriental, and regal, sense to the decor. Views of Gülhane Park ease the eye, too. The rates are a bit high for this neighborhood (isn't the area around the train supposed to be cheap?), but the freebies (including free cooking lessons) at least go a bit toward easing the sticker shock.

Sirkeci Konak, Taya Hatun Sok. 5, 34120 Sirkeci. ✆ **0212/528-4344.** Fax 0212/528-4455. www.sirkecikonak.com. 52 units. 135€–255€ double; 230€–490€ suite. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; free airport transfer for stays of 3 nights or more; concierge; exercise room; *hamam;* Jacuzzi; indoor pool; room service; sauna; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Inexpensive

Sapphire This is not the newest or the most impressive hotel in the neighborhood. But if all one wants is a decent, comfortable, and clean room, with a great location and unpretentious, honest staff, that won't break the bank (and isn't that why you chose this neighborhood in the first place?), then this is a reasonable choice.

Ibni Kemal Cad. 14–16, 34410 Sirkeci. ✆ **0212/520-5686.** Fax 0212/520-1009. www.hotelsapphire.com. 55 units. Mar–Oct 80€ double, 150€ suite. MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; free airport transfer for stays of 2 nights or more; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Sude Konak Value As one of the newer and glossier additions to the neighborhood, the Sude offers fresh rooms, pristine bathrooms, and all of the amenities of a four-star hotel. The trade-off, though, is that the building was obviously renovated with the goal of getting as many rooms on a floor as possible. The hotel is conveniently located steps from the Gülhane stop on the tramway, but also an easy walk to Topkapı, the Ayasofya, and pretty much anywhere. This is a good option if the rates stay competitive. Jazz music fills the air of the rooftop-terrace restaurant with views of the Ayasofya.

Ebussud Cad. 24, 34410 Sirkeci. ✆ **0212/513-2100.** Fax 0212/513-2003. www.sudekonak.com. 40 units. 60€ double; 85€ suite. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfer (20€); concierge; *hamam;* health club; room service; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

4 BEYOĞLU

TAKSIM

Very Expensive

Ceylan Inter-Continental ★★★ The central glass-and-marble staircase sets the stage for just the right amount of pomp to cater to this über-luxurious five-star hotel's international clientele. Everything about the hotel, renovated in 2008, is plush and elegant, and even the standard rooms are serviced by a butler. Rooms on the executive floors and in the suites get CD and DVD players, and in-room movies are available in all the rooms via pay-per-view and premium cable. Business travelers will feel like they never left the office (except for those views of the Bosphorus), while spouses can luxuriate in the sublime embrace of the spa.

If you book online, you can get rates as low as 120€, a very appealing possibility when compared to the rates for rooms in Sultanahmet. And it's all just a few steps away from the bustle of Taksim Square.

Asker Ocagı Cad. 1, 34435 Taksim. ✆ **0212/231-2121** or 800/327-0200 in the U.S., 0181/847-2277 in the U.K., 008/221-335 in Australia, or 0800/442-215 in New Zealand. Fax 0212/231-2180. www.ceylanistanbul.com. 390 units. 120€–500€ double; 400€ and up suite. Rates reflect season and room type. Breakfast and tax not included. AE, MC, V. Self-parking (25TL). **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 3 bars; airport transfers; babysitting; concierge; executive or concierge-level rooms; health club and spa; outdoor pool; room service; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (for a fee).

Ritz-Carlton Istanbul ★★★ The modern glass monolith that houses the Ritz-Carlton has marred the skyline above Dolmabahçe Palace for years, eliciting criticism at almost every turn. But the hotel's opulence and luxury make it forgivable. The hotel strives for a niche alongside that of the other multistarred hotels with exotic massage treatments, a premier health center, and fitness packages. Standard rooms are spacious, with large picture windows; the suites benefit from lovely parquet flooring and splendid views of the Bosphorus. Also, somewhere under all those pillows and bolsters, the beds are decadently high and plush. Bathrooms have bathtubs and separate showers, towel warmers, scales, handmade tiles, and designer soaps. The *hamam* is one of the most luxurious in town. Guests of the hotel currently are afforded free access to the spa; of course, treatments are on a fee basis.

Elmadağ Askerocağı Cad. 15, 80200 Şişli. ✆ **0212/334-4444.** Fax 0212/334-4455. www.ritzcarlton.com. 244 units. 250€–450€ double; 550€ and up suite. Taxes and breakfast not included. AE, DC, MC, V. Valet parking (20€/day). **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 3 bars; airport transfer (100€ plus tax); babysitting; children's programs; concierge; executive-level rooms; health club and spa; indoor pool; room service; smoke-free rooms; spa; Wi-Fi. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, fax, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (for a fee).

Expensive

Divan First among the Koç Group's three Divan hotels in Istanbul and built in 1956, the Divan was the first five-star property to grace Taksim Square. In the 5 decades since, other, more modern hotels sprang up (including two Divans, outside the city center), and this, the flagship property, a dreary five-story concrete block, was an eyesore to clients and owners alike. In 2008, the complete demolition of the property was completed, and it is expected that by the end of 2010 (optimistically speaking, for this is Turkey, after all), the Koç family will cut the ribbon on a gorgeous new, Thierry Despont–designed building of reinterpreted classical Turkish architecture and unerring, deluxe hospitality. The hotel will have 228 rooms, 2 themed restaurants, the requisite Divan patisserie, a spa, a swimming pool, and meeting and conference rooms.

Cumhuriyet Cad. 2, 34435 Taksim. Contact head office for information: ✆ **0216/522-6300** or go to www.divan.com.tr.

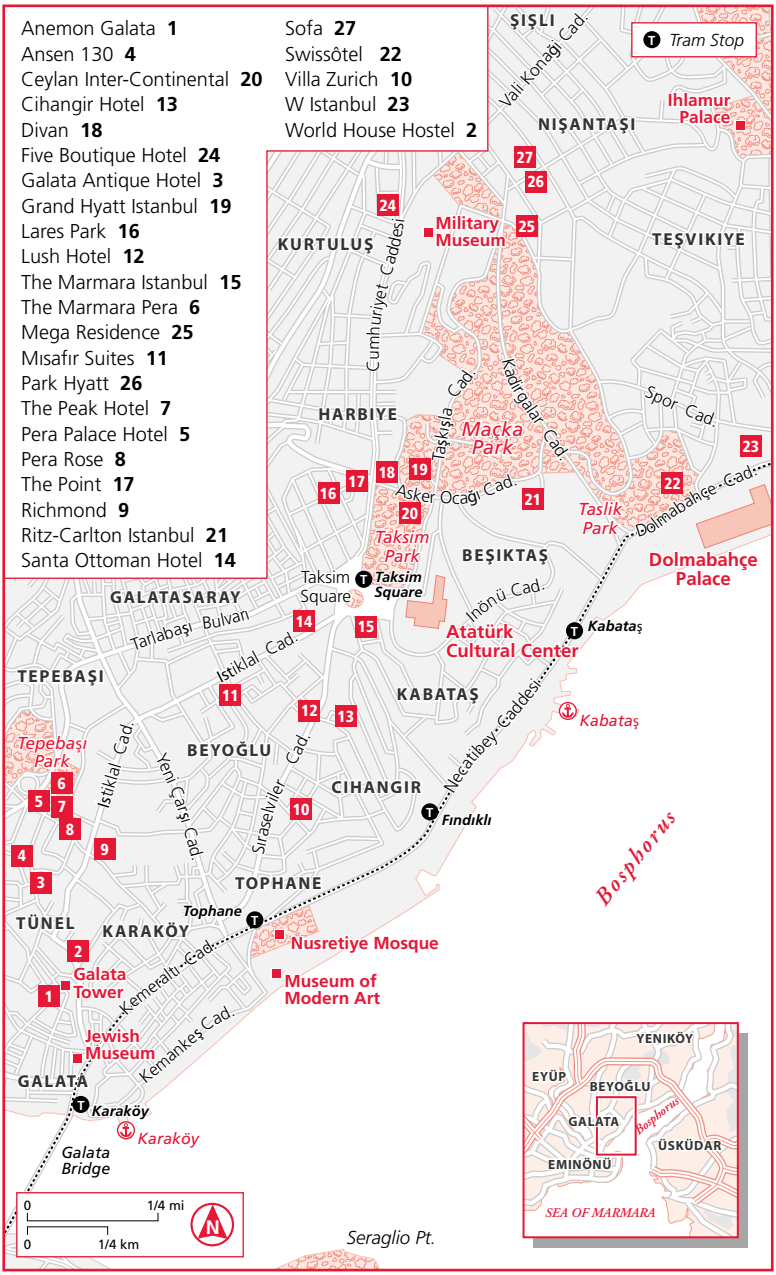
Grand Hyatt Istanbul ★ An Istanbul institution for decades (until 2009 it was the Hyatt Regency), this is the Hyatt's first appearance in a Frommer's guide to Istanbul. The omission was deliberate: no point in sending visitors to such an exotic location to a bland American-managed formula. But also American is the over-the-top service, which we like while away from home, particularly when we're on business. Plus, it's got one of the best swimming pools in the center city and continues to lure expats to Spazio, its Italian restaurant. It's also a lot less pretentious than the Ceylan Inter-Continental across the road.

Taskisla Cad., 34437 Taksim. ✆ **0212/368-1234.** Fax 0212/368-1000. http://istanbul.regency.hyatt.com. 360 units. 200€–400€ double; 500€ and up suite. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 6 bars; babysitting; concierge; health club and spa; outdoor pool; room service; smoke-free rooms; lit tennis court. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, Internet, minibar.

The Marmara Istanbul ★★★ The Marmara is an excellent choice for those traveling for business or pleasure, particularly for its towering location above central and bustling Taksim Square. In fact, the hotel got so popular that they opened a second one, the **Marmara Pera** down the street (p. 86) and then another (and so on). The Marmara Istanbul has everything necessary for an exclusive visit to Istanbul, including spacious bathrooms and spectacular views. The recently renovated Club Floor specifically pampers business travelers with 24-hour floor supervision, complimentary breakfast, and in-room fax and coffee service.

Taksim Sq., 34437 Taksim. ✆ **0212/251-4696.** Fax 0212/244-0509. www.themarmarahotels.com. 458 units. 160€–210€ double; 239€ Club Floor; 400€ and up suite. Rates exclude tax and breakfast. Special weekend packages available. AE, MC, V. Ticketed parking lot. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 3 bars; airport transfer (90€); executive-level rooms; health club and spa; outdoor pool; room service; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, DVD player (suites only), hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Mısafır Suites ★★★ Moments Dutch-born Joost and his partners waited 4 years for the drug addicts and squatters to vacate the derelict building they purchased before razing it and starting from scratch. The facade, however, is original, while the inside is embellished with new basalt floors, marble bathrooms, and artistic textiles. Rooms are enormous (as are the bathrooms, which are stocked with complimentary L'Occitaine


Anemon Galata 1
Ansen 130 4
Ceylan Inter-Continental 20
Cihangir Hotel 13
Divan 18
Five Boutique Hotel 24
Galata Antique Hotel 3
Grand Hyatt Istanbul 19
Lares Park 16
Lush Hotel 12
The Marmara Istanbul 15
The Marmara Pera 6
Mega Residence 25
Mısafır Suites 11
Park Hyatt 26
The Peak Hotel 7
Pera Palace Hotel 5
Pera Rose 8
The Point 17
Richmond 9
Ritz-Carlton Istanbul 21
Santa Ottoman Hotel 14
Sofa 27
Swissôtel 22
Villa Zurich 10
W Istanbul 23
World House Hostel 2
Tram Stop
ŞIŞLI
Vali Konağı Cad.
NIŞANTAŞI
Ihlamur Palace
KURTULUŞ
Military Museum
TEŞVIKIYE
Cumhuriyet Caddesi
Taşkışla Cad.
Kadırgalar Cad.
Spor Cad.
HARBIYE
Maçka Park
Asker Ocağı Cad.
Taslik Park
Dolmabahçe Cad.
Taksim Park
Taksim Square
BEŞIKTAŞ
Dolmabahçe Palace
GALATASARAY
Tarlabaşı Bulvarı
İnönü Cad.
Atatürk Cultural Center
Kabataş
TEPEBAŞI
İstiklal Cad.
KABATAŞ
Tepebaşı Park
BEYOĞLU
Yeni Çarşı Cad.
Sıraselviler Cad.
CIHANGIR
Necatibey Caddesi
Fındıklı
TOPHANE
Bosphorus
TÜNEL
KARAKÖY
Tophane
Nusretiye Mosque
Galata Tower
Museum of Modern Art
Kemeraltı Cad.
Jewish Museum
Kemankeş Cad.
GALATA
Karaköy
Galata Bridge
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0 1/4 mi
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BEYOĞLU
GALATA
Bosphorus
ÜSKÜDAR
EMINÖNÜ
SEA OF MARMARA

products), with king-size beds, twin sofas flanking oversize circular ottomans, and long, conveniently placed upholstered benches. It's all very smart, very well planned out, and very, *very* delightful. The restaurant **Sekiz/Eight** (p. 110) has a hip vibe and top-notch creative cuisine.

Gazeteci Erol Dernek Sok. 1, 34430 Beyoğlu (from the Ağa Mosque on Istiklal Cad., turn down Sadir Alışık Sok.). ✆ **0212/249-8930.** Fax 0212/249-8940. www.misafirsuites.com. 7 units. 140€ and up suite. See website for promotions. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfer (25€ from Atatürk Airport; 55€ from Sabiha Gökçen); concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV/DVD, CD player, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Moderate

Lares Park Value This is a really good value for Taksim, if you can score the promotional 90€ rate. A standard unit offers plenty of room to move around, while "deluxe" rooms are even bigger and recently redesigned. The Presidential suite, meanwhile, gets you a duplex with fridge, clothes washer, dishwasher, microwave, and CD/DVD player. The health club is a haven of relaxation, with patio-style lounge chairs set around a large indoor area with swimming pool, Jacuzzi, and juice bar. There's also a fitness center and tempting Turkish bath, and you don't have to pay a cent extra to use any of it (you do for the massage). Add a meeting room to the mix and this is the perfect location for a small business getaway.

Topçu Cad. 23, 80090 Taksim. ✆ **0212/254-5100.** Fax 0212/256-9249. www.laresparktaksim.com. 179 units. 90€–230€ double and deluxe; 200€–550€ suite. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfer (70€); babysitting; concierge; exercise room; *hamam*; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Lush Hotel ★ Awaiting guests are down-filled duvets and pillows (regrettably, I had to avail myself of the non-allergenic ones they keep on hand), 100% Turkish cotton sheets, complimentary l'Occitaine toiletries, and plump Turkish cotton bathrobes. And it's hip because it's got that certain *je ne sais quoi.* Maybe it's hip because it's a pioneer—Sıraselviler Avenue used to be a bit dicey, but it's now very close to having a clean bill of health. True to the building's 19th-century origins, details like exposed brick, parquet flooring, and decorative moldings are found throughout, albeit not uniformly so (room size also varies from a tiny 14 sq. m/150 sq. ft. to a generous 24 sq. m/258 sq. ft.; the Sedir Suite is even larger and designed like an Ottoman sitting room). The newest annoyance, however, among the truly hip hotels (like this one) is the placement of a digital scale in the bathroom. Perhaps this is to remind us of how good the food is in the brasserie downstairs?

Sıraselviler Cad. 12, 34433 Taksim. ✆ **0212/243-9595.** Fax 0212/292-1566. www.lushhotel.com. 22 units. 125€–220€ double; 300€ suite. Rates lower Dec–Mar. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfer (35€); concierge; exercise room; *hamam*; room service; smoke-free rooms; spa. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

The Point The triangular, even Flatiron-like, Point Hotel is one of the earliest breed of "design hotels" offering something visually more appealing than the beige carpeting and innocuous floral bedspreads that pervade the hotel scene (but not this book!). Standard ("deluxe") rooms have wired Internet, while suites get free Wi-Fi. The unmistakable advantage of this hotel, besides the spa and indoor swimming pool (also triangular), and the location, is the service, which is attentive, helpful, and friendly. The ground-floor Japanese restaurant, Udonya, is extremely popular for the after-hours crowd.

Topçu Cad. 2, 80400 Taksim. ✆ **0212/313-5000.** www.pointhotel.com. 193 units. 130€ double; 195€–345€ suite. Tax and breakfast not included. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; airport transfer (35€); babysitting; concierge; exercise room; Internet in lobby; indoor pool; room service; smoke-free rooms; spa. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV/DVD, CD player, hair dryer, Internet, minibar, Wi-Fi (in suites).

CIHANGIR

Moderate

Villa Zurich More people choosing to stay near Taksim Square are opting for the trendy neighborhood of Cihangir, the equivalent of the Village in New York or Soho in London. On the tourist map thanks to the excellent **Doğa Balık** rooftop restaurant (p. 112), the Villa Zurich is also a popular meeting point for neighborhood locals in the hotel's street-level cafe. All rooms have Jacuzzis (except the singles, which have rain showers), and the one minuscule suite is little more than a standard room with a Bosphorus view. Still, you'd choose this hotel before you picked the Cihangir Hotel (unless you wanted the view at discount rates), and the rooms are comfortable and centrally located. Just book early for one of the more roomy units.

Akarsu Yokusu Cad. 44–46, 34433 Cihangir (follow Siraselviler Cad. down from Taksim Sq. and turn left when you reach the mosque). ✆ **0212/293-0604.** Fax 0212/249-0232. www.hotelvillazurich.com. 41 units. 120€ double (add 40€ for sea view). Rates lower in winter. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; airport transfer (35€); concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, cable TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Inexpensive

Cihangir Hotel Value Finds At first glance, the charm quotient is pretty low at best. Actually, the hotel is an eyesore from outside. But nowhere else in town will you pay 80€ for a double room with a Bosphorus view. The hotel itself is pretty old, but rooms retain a newish patina even though they were last renovated in 2001. It's a short walk to Taksim Square, but remember that this neighborhood is very hilly.

Aslan Yatağı Sok. 17, 34433 Cihangir. ✆ **0212/251-5317.** Fax 0212/251-5321. www.cihangirhotel.com. 90 units. 70€ double; 80€ Bosphorus-view double. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; free airport transfer; room service; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite and pay TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

TÜNEL & TEPEBAŞI

Expensive

Ansen 130 ★★ Finds It seems as though rooms in all-suite hotels in Istanbul are just flying off the shelves. Go figure. Ansen 130, inserted in a restored 19th-century architectural jewel, fills this need by offering 10 positively cavernous rooms that any bachelor looking for an apartment would kill for. Light wood and laminate dominate the decor, which is punctuated with more beige and a bit of black in the sofa, bedspread, and electronics. Bathrooms have pleasantly chunky hardware, and there's a kitchenette with everything you'll need for a long or short stay except the groceries. Ansen 130 has a ground-level bar that is popular even among nonguests, a cigar/wine bar next door, and a restaurant.

Meşrutiyet Cad., Ansen 130, 34430 Tepebaşı. ✆ **0212/245-8808.** Fax 0212/245-7179. www.ansensuites.com. 10 units. 150€–275€ suite. See website for weekly and monthly rates. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; airport transfer (40€); room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, kitchen, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Pera Palace Hotel ★★★ In its heyday, the Pera Palace represented the Francophilia that had taken hold over the Ottoman Empire. It was built in 1892 as lodging befitting the exclusive passengers of the Orient Express, and accordingly the hotel's very own

Orient Bar became a meeting place for drama and intrigue. The star-studded guest list includes Agatha Christie (who wrote *Murder on the Orient Express* in room no. 411), Atatürk (room no. 101, where he spent the days preceding the Gallipoli campaign, should remain intact), Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Greta Garbo, Edward VIII, Josephine Baker, and Mata Hari. After an extensive process of renovation and restoration, this formerly well-worn and beloved time capsule debuted in June 2010 as the city's newest, five-star crown jewel.

Meşrutiyet Cad. 98–100, 80050 Tepebaşı. ✆ **0212/251-4560.** www.perapalace.com. 115 units. 185€–300€ double; 475€ and up suite. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants, bar, babysitting, concierge, exercise room and spa, room service, smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, MP3 docking station, no phone, Wi-Fi.

Moderate

Anemon Galata The restoration of this 19th-century neighborhood gem was at the forefront of the revival of Galata. The building enjoys a front-row seat to the neighborhood plaza at the base of the commanding Galata Tower. The hotel itself offers sophisticated old-world style and in-room architectural features such as original crown moldings and ceiling frescoes. Wall-to-wall carpeting (which I barely tolerate) and staid decor in the rooms do the building less than full justice, but the upside of all that sound-sucking upholstery is that you certainly won't hear the neighbors. For the best views, pick a room on the third floor or above.

Büyükhendek Cad. 11, 80020 Kuledibi. ✆ **0212/293-2343.** Fax 0212/292-2340. www.anemonhotels.com. 27 units. 125€–150€ double. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Rooftop restaurant; bar; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Galata Antique Hotel Value Located just down the street from the British embassy and a few steps away from the entrance to Tünel and Istiklal Caddesi, the Galata Antique provides a friendly and convenient home base for any stay in Istanbul. The entrance to the hotel sits in the middle of a steep incline navigated by a flight of exterior steps, so the Galata Antique may not be appropriate for everyone. The building was designed by the French architect Vallaury in 1881 and still retains some 19th-century charm in its caged elevator and carved wooden arches. The rooms are basic and a bit old, while the bathrooms have sparse sink and shower setups (although perfectly fine); but the owner, Düygu, tells me that it's time for a face-lift, so stay tuned. Breakfast on the top-floor terrace is also a great way to start the morning.

Meşrutiyet Cad., Nergis Sok. 10, 80090 Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/245-5944.** Fax 0212/245-5947. www.galata antiquehotel.com. 27 units. 86€–115€ double. MC, V. **Amenities:** Bar; free airport transfer for stays of 4 nights or more; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

The Marmara Pera ★★ Value The sister property of the Marmara Istanbul hit the ground running in 2005. It occupies a tower flanked by the Pera Palace Hotel and sits in the heart of the more vibrant section of Beyoğlu. And in spite of its 200 rooms, the hotel actually feels like a boutique property, as spaces are kept to manageable scale and the decor is understatedly trendy. The architect even saved the original tile paving where possible. Splurge the extra 50€ or so for a sea-view room; it'll be worth it. There's a patisserie, bar, and restaurant on the ground floor, plus the independently owned contemporary-style **Mikla** restaurant (p. 109) on the top floors, commanding the best views.

Meşrutiyet Cad., Derviş Sok. 1, 34430 Tepebaşı. ✆ **0212/251-4646.** Fax 0212/249-8033. www.themarmarahotels.com. 200 units. 80€–190€ double; 277€ suite. Rates exclude tax and breakfast. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Rooftop restaurant; bar; airport transfer (43€); concierge; health club and spa; rooftop pool. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, DVD player (suites only), hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

The Peak Hotel ★ Value Almost a half a century after opening its doors, the Peak Hotel (formerly the Yenişehir Palace) beckoned me with the fresh scent of recent renovations. The hotel just completed massive renovations on a full complement of rooms and common areas, allowing this formerly dreary hotel to latch onto the city's rising crest of tourism receipts. Rooms are now fresh—new carpeting and furniture and an overhaul of the bedclothes (ranging from sleek whites and beiges to Ottoman-style frilly)—and bathrooms are bright and modern. The hotel is ridiculously central: In 5 minutes' walk you can be in Galata, Istiklal Caddesi, or Tünel, from which you can hook up with the transport system to Taksim Square or the historic center. The location also implies that guests have business needs, and indeed the hotel has meeting rooms and even a cigar/wine bar facing the trendy Asmalımescit area.

Meşrutiyet Cad., Oteller Sok. 1–3, 34430 Tepebaşı. ✆ **0212/252-7160.** Fax 0212/249-7507. www.thepeakhotel.com.tr. 171 units. 79€–120€ double; 125€ suite. See website for special offers. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; room service; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Pera Rose Value When the reception quoted me a rate 30% below the listed rack rate during a fall visit, I started to smell a value. The Pera Rose is another renovated and restored business hotel on what used to be a dead end of Meşrutiyet Caddesi (most just passed by on the way to the Pera Palace or the Marmara Pera, both on nearby corners). I actually like this hotel more than the neighboring Peak Hotel, primarily because of the old-world feel and smaller scale. All rooms are outfitted with scrumptious orthopedic mattresses. And as befitting a freshly renovated hotel, bathrooms are brightly tiled. Suites have Jacuzzis, and there are two pretty exciting duplexes.

Meşrutiyet Cad. 87, 34430 Tepebaşı. ✆ **0212/243-1500.** Fax 0212/243-1501. www.perarose.com. 52 units. 79€ double; 109€ suite. MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; concierge; exercise room; *hamam*; room service; sauna; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Richmond Value The location of this Belle Epoque hotel right on Istiklal Caddesi couldn't be better. It's close to the lively cafes and restaurants of Beyoğlu/Tünel, but remains accessible to Taksim, Galata, Karaköy, and the Old City with a minimum of effort. It's a bit older than the snazzy new deluxe "boutique" hotels mushrooming around Taksim Square, but nevertheless a reliable choice and a good value. Standard rooms have all of the necessary trappings, but the newer "Executive" rooms have parquet floors, sea views, and more space for just a little more money. The very popular rooftop bar/restaurant, **Leb-i-Derya** (p. 114), is atmospheric and blessed with great views. Breakfast is served in the cozy brick cellar, but that's only in the unlikely event that you make it past the hotel's patisserie without stopping on your way down.

Istiklal Cad. 445, 80670 Tünel. ✆ **212/252-5460.** Fax 212/252-9707. www.richmondhotels.com.tr. 206 units. 79€–120€ double; 279€ suite. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bar; airport transfer (40€); concierge; executive-level rooms; room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Santa Ottoman Hotel This little corner hotel, opposite the Armenian Church on Zambak Sokak and enjoying wonderfully cluttered city views from the rooftop terrace, offers five floors of tiny, clean rooms with basic Turkish accents and an extra utility sink next to the minibars. If you want a bit more room than what's on offer, book one of the rooms in the "3" line (203, 303, 403).

Şehit Muhtar Mah. Karanfil, Zambak Sok. 1, 34430 Taksim. ✆ **0212/252-2878.** www.santaottomanboutiquehotel.com. 80€–90€ double. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; free airport transfer for stays of 5 nights or more; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Fun Facts

A Mystery Worthy of Agatha Christie Herself

There has been much ado over **Agatha Christie's "mysterious" 11-day disappearance,** especially when it stands to substantiate the factual basis of a movie script *and* boost the profits of a historic hotel. The 1979 Warner Bros. movie *Agatha,* which makes reference to 11 missing days in the life of the author, was met with criticism by those who accused the movie studio of having fabricated the author's disappearance. In response, the movie studio hired a medium to get to the bottom of those 11 days. In a spiritual session, the medium, Tamara Rand, was "advised" by the late author that the answer to the mystery could be found in room no. 411 of the Pera Palace Hotel, where as a repeat guest between 1926 and 1932, Christie penned *Murder on the O rient Expr ess.* In a much-hyped event, representatives of the film company and a group of reporters assembled in room no. 411 while a remote connection was established with Ms. Rand, who led them to a rusty old key hidden beneath the floorboards. Presumably, the key was to the author's diary and would reveal the answers to those 11 days. The key never left the premises, because the hotel and studio executives were unable to reach an agreement on compensation. (The hotel's chairman asked for $2 million plus 15% of the film's profits "for restoration of the hotel" in exchange for the key.) Rumors persisted about Christie's whereabouts, eventually putting her in a nearby hotel in the arms of Dashiell Hammett. That the author makes no mention of these 11 days in her autobiography has over the years only fueled the fire. In spite of the uproar caused by the recovery of her abandoned car and several cryptic notes she sent before her "disappearance," the truth may be less racy. It seems that she simply checked into a health spa in Yorkshire on December 4, 1926, under the surname of her husband's lover.

Inexpensive

World House Hostel Value One of the newer establishments to open on Galip Dede Caddesi is this low-budget hostel, which also offers private, en suite double rooms for 43€. It's basic, to be sure, but in exchange you'll get the good-natured, attentive, and informal attention of a hotel run by guys just trying to make a living and have some fun at the same time. Dorm rooms for four, six, and eight people go as low as 8€ per person. The related I-House over near Taksim has private doubles from 38€.

Galip Dede Cad. 85, 80020 Galata. ✆ **0212/293-5520.** www.worldhouseistanbul.com. 5 units. 43€ double. Taxes not included. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; Wi-Fi in lobby. *In room:* No phone.

NORTH OF BEYOĞLU

Very Expensive

Park Hyatt Housed in a former government building where a Turkish poet later lived, the Park Hyatt was transformed into a 90-room Italian Art Deco palace by New York–based GKV architects. The lobby is minimalist and very light, and oversize rooms include vintage photos by Turkish photographer Ara Güler. Spa rooms cater to the world-weary

traveler, and include a hamam and a tub with color-therapy lights. Ask for a room on a lower level, or you may be kept up by noise from the bar on the eighth floor. The concierge and overall service are superb. On-site is a wine bar and Prime Steakhouse, which bills itself as Istanbul's first authentic steakhouse.

Bronz Sok. 4, 34367 Teşvikiye. ✆ **0212/315-1234.** Fax 0212/315-1235. http://istanbul.park.hyatt.com. 90 units. From 280€ double; 378€ and up suite. Rates exclude breakfast and taxes. AE, MC, V. Valet parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (90€); babysitting; children's center or programs; concierge; executive or concierge-level rooms; health club; outdoor pool; room service; sauna; spa smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, MP3 docking station, Wi-Fi (for a fee).

Expensive

Mega Residence Just a stone's throw from the tony shops of Nişantaşı, Maçka Democracy Park, and the Lutfi Kirdar Convention Center, the recently renovated Mega Residence, enclosed within a preserved 19th-century facade, has become a magnet for professionals, conventioneers, and long-stay visitors (the hotel offers daily, weekly, and monthly promotional rates that can be as low as half the rate listed below). All of the 23 oversize rooms come with a kitchenette (and a connection to the adjacent room for those wanting a suite). Bathroom doors are glass paned with Venetian blinds for privacy; the playfully exhibitionist trend carries over to the enormous Roman shower. The only downside is that while the hotel's location is convenient to the convention center and Nişantaşı, a more casual visitor focused on the city's rich sites will have to rely primarily on taxis.

Eytam Cad. 33, 34367 Maçka. ✆ **0212/296-7920.** Fax 0212/231-4461. www.megaresidence.com. 23 units. US$160 double; US$320 suite. Rates include breakfast but not taxes. AE, MC, V. Free valet parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfer (50€); babysitting; concierge; exercise room; room service; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, DVD (on request), fax line (on request), hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Sofa ★★★ Moments Finds Entering this hotel, you could be in any of the cosmopolitan centers of the greatest cities of the world. The warm reception will remind you that you are indeed in Istanbul, in the city's toniest neighborhood. Since opening in 2006, the Sofa has been attracting fashion types, journalists, and the well-heeled in search of a high-end boutique experience, while positioning itself, through art exhibitions, at the center of Istanbul's vibrant art scene. Although the hotel's "anything, anytime service" applies to guests of the suites only, the slogan is indicative of the personalized service the hotel strives to provide to all guests (think notepads with your name on them when you arrive). The management also recognizes how difficult it is to get out of a plush bed by keeping very liberal checkout policies (check in as early as noon; out as late as 3pm). There are conference and meeting facilities (and computer rentals), and one of the more sought-after spas in the city.

Tesvikiye Cad. 123, 34367 Nişantaşı. ✆ **0212/368-1818.** www.thesofahotel.com. 82 units. 220€ double; 350€–950€ suite. Breakfast and tax not included. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; airport transfer (50€); babysitting; concierge; health club and spa; indoor pool; room service; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Swissôtel ★★★ The Swissôtel is one of those brands that says quality, luxury, sophistication, and understated elegance. It's perched on a wooded hill just opposite Dolmabahçe Palace surrounded by 26 hectares (65 acres) of grounds that were once part of the palace gardens. This setting high above the Bosphorus (a setting that non-taxi-using guests must navigate) makes the most of views of the waterway by providing some sort of view from most of the hotel's 600 units. Levels of luxury vary from deluxe and

huge standard rooms to Executive and on to Panorama Suites, but everybody gets some. Business travelers get extra-special treatment with an Executive Lounge, private butler service, and complementary suit pressing. There are extensive meeting and conference facilities and the spa is world-class sublime.

Bayildim Cad. 2, 34357 Maçka. ✆ **0212/326-1100.** Fax 0212/326-1122. www.swissotel.com. 600 units. 119€–252€ double; 550€ and up suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Valet parking. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants; 5 bars; airport transfers (50€); babysitting; concierge; executive-level rooms; *hamam;* health club and spa; indoor and outdoor pool; room service; smoke-free rooms; tennis court. *In room*: A/C, satellite TV, TV/DVD, TV/VCR, movie library, hair dryer, minibar, MP3 docking station, Wi-Fi.

Moderate

Five Boutique Hotel ★★ Finds Everything's organic in this progressive hotel, from the mattresses, to the curtains, to the cleaning products, down to the certified organic produce served at breakfast. Even the wall paint is anti-carcinogenic, and the wallpaper is recyclable. Five is discreetly located down a cluttered side street in Harbiye, diagonally opposite the Military Museum and a healthy (10 min. or less) walking distance to Nişantaşı and Taksim. All of the rooms are slightly different, with some equipped with bathtubs rather than showers, and only a few with a balcony. The elevator goes only to the fourth floor, so guests staying in one of the two fifth-floor penthouse suites are required to walk up that last flight of steps.

Cumhuriyet Cad. Prof. Celal Öker Sok. 5, 34373 Harbiye. ✆ **0212/296-5553.** www.fiveboutiquehotel.com. 19 units. 110€–160€ double. MC, V. **Amenities:** Organic cafe; airport transfer (50€); exercise room; free Internet in lobby; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, minibar, Wi-Fi.

5 ALONG THE BOSPHORUS

Those who choose to stay along the Bosphorus area are generally not the type of people concerned with price tags. These are the deluxe properties of Istanbul, offering staggering views, staggering meals, and staggering prices. Plus, the location isn't very central. Recognizing this, many of these properties offer shuttle-boat service to the key points of the city (or anywhere you want to go, if you're willing to pay). If you can manage it and don't mind sitting in a little traffic (you can't go everywhere by boat, after all), the trade-off of convenience is more than balanced by the serene and spectacular experience of staying on the Bosphorus.

VERY EXPENSIVE

Çırağan Palace Hotel Kempinski Istanbul ★★★ Residence of the last Ottoman sultans, the hotel that you see today is actually two buildings: the faithfully restored stone-and-marble sultan's palace (housing the VIP suites) and the modern five-star deluxe hotel, both standing majestically on the shores of the Bosphorus and presiding over a magnificent collection of sculpted lawns, marble gates, a waterside swimming pool, and even a putting green. The guest list reads like a who's who of international royalty, all lining up for a Bosphorus-view room (not all get one). It's definitely worth the trouble to upgrade to a standard room with Bosphorus view (why bother for a park view, really?). The suites in the modern wing add living space, upgraded decor, and views, but it's in the newly renovated palace section where things truly get interesting. These are salons that recall a statelier time: Sumptuous textiles swath elegant antiques, while high ceilings and gilded architectural features remind you that this was indeed once a working palace.

Çırağan Cad. 84, 80700 Beşiktaş. ✆ **800/426-3135** in the U.S.; 800/363-0366 in Canada; 0800/868-588 in the U.K.; 800/623-578 in Australia; 0800/446-368 in New Zealand; 0212/258-3377 in Istanbul. Fax 0212/259-6686. www.kempinski-istanbul.com. 313 units. 505€ double park view; 670€–1,350€ sea view; 1,375€ and way up suites. Breakfast and tax not included. See website for promotions. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants (Tuğra, p. 119); 4 bars; airport transfer (100€); babysitting; concierge; concierge-level rooms; health club and spa; heliport; indoor and outdoor pool; putting green; room service; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, hair dryer, Internet, minibar.

Four Seasons Bosphorus ★★★ Moments The new Four Seasons property kept hopeful clientele in suspense for more than 4 years before opening in late 2008 with great fanfare. The hotel complex is composed of the restored and stately central property, the Ottoman Atik Paşa mansion, flanked by two regrettably practical modern blocks. (If the Çırağan can get away with it, then why not the Four Seasons?) Apart from that tiny criticism, the hotel is a practically flawless center of hospitality and service. East-facing rooms in the paşa's mansion benefit from spectacular, head-on views of the Bosphorus. The (heated) outdoor pool sits seamlessly adjacent to the seafront, and a private dock provides convenient access, via the hotel's speedboat service (or one's private yacht), to key points around the city (or to nowhere, whichever is one's pleasure). Parents get to wrap their little ones up in child-size bathrobes at night and pamper them with free milk and cookies. There's a cinema, banquet rooms, a business center, and a waterside setting to die for.

Çırağan Cad. 28, 34349 Beşiktaş. ✆ **800/332-3442** in the U.S., or operator in Turkey 0212/381-4000. Direct line to hotel ✆ 0212/381-4000. Fax 0212/381-4100. www.fourseasons.com/bosphorus. 166 units. 400€ and up double and suite. AE, MC, V. Valet parking. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 3 bars; airport transfer (100€); babysitting; concierge; health club and spa; indoor and outdoor pool; room service; smoke-free rooms; tennis (at the Swissôtel property). *In room:* A/C, satellite TV/VCR, CD/DVD player, fax, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (5€ per hour; free in business center).

Les Ottomans ★★★ Moments This lavish hotel is *the* talk of the town and only the most overused (but apt) superlatives will describe it. My apologies in advance. Let's start by saying that the powerhouse behind this hotel villa, Ahu Aysal, spared no expense (upwards of $60 million) in the reconstruction of the former Muhzinzade Mehmet Paşa, a wooden mansion that stood on this site (the exterior is an exact replica). The result is a sumptuous, 10-room (plus one; Ahu lives on the top floor) . . . palace? abode? Shangri-la? In creating the hotel, Ms. Aysal employed the renowned Turkish interior designer Zeynep Fadillioğlu, as well as the feng shui expert Yap Cheng Hai, to ensure the hotel conformed to principles of harmony. Feeling a bit underworthy upon my visit, I found that the hotel is opulent without being ostentatious; it's just what you'd imagine of a modern royal palace: gilded calligraphic friezes, (antique) ivory inlay, magnificent silk fabrics, and of course, let's not forget the plasma TVs (some suites have as many as three). And I haven't even gotten to the Caudalie spa (free to hotel guests), butler service, or cinema.

Muallim Naci Cad. 68, 34345 Kuruçeşme. ✆ **0212/359-1500.** Fax 0212/359-1540. www.lesottomans.com. 10 units. 800€ and up suite. Rates include breakfast and minibar but exclude taxes. AE, MC, V. Pets allowed. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; airport transfer (100€ and up depending on the Mercedes or BMW model you choose); concierge; exercise room; *hamam;* outdoor pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV/VCR, CD player, fax, hair dryer, laptop, minibar, Wi-Fi.

W Istanbul ★★ From a block of abandoned row houses built in 1875 by Sultan Abdülaziz, to a stylish Starwood-branded W Hotel targeting the young, hip, and yes, even club-going set. Now, doormen give the hotel that "velvet rope" feel, and low-light,

Fun Facts **Saving for a Rainy Day?**

The Sultan's Suite in the Çırağan Palace has gold bathroom fixtures and goes for 26,000€ a night—the most expensive room in Europe.

neon-backlit hallways mimic the backstage of a rock concert. Studios and duplex rooms—some with their own balcony, private gardens, or outdoor cabana—all come with the ridiculously comfortable "W Signature Beds," stylish decor, and clever (sensual even) lighting to set whatever mood you like. And setting the bar higher for concierges everywhere is the W's "Whatever, Whenever" service, "transforming your dreams into reality . . . as long as it's legal."

Süleyman Seba Cad. 27, 34357 Beşiktaş. ✆ **0212/381-2121.** Fax 0212/381-2199. www.wistanbul.com.tr. 130 units. 225€–305€ double; 475€ suite. AE, MC, V. Self- (24€/day) and valet parking. Pets allowed. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfer (95€); babysitting; concierge; exercise room; room service; smoke-free rooms; spa. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, MP3 docking station, Wi-Fi (33€ per day).

EXPENSIVE

Radisson Blu ★ In January 2006, this piece of waterfront real estate adjacent to the artsy neighborhood of Ortaköy became one of the newer additions to the European Bosphorus. The target audience is business travelers, Turkish weekenders, and anyone else in the market for good design, seamless comfort, and a boutique experience. The hotel features a grassy "beach" and a spa offering a variety of treatments. The adjacent parking garage is next door to the charming Ortaköy quay and just steps away from some of the best nightlife the city has to offer.

Çırağan Cad. 46, 34349 Ortaköy. From the U.S. and Australia ✆ **800/333-3333,** or from the U.K. and New Zealand 800/3333-3333. ✆ 0212/310-1500 in Turkey. Fax 0212/310-1515. www.radissonblu.com/hotel-istanbul. 120 units. 180€–335€ double; 450€ and up suite. AE, MC, V. Free parking. Pets allowed. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 3 bars; airport transfer (75€); concierge; *hamam;* health club and spa; indoor pool; room service; smoke-free rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

6 THE ASIAN SIDE

Similar to staying in the hotels along the European side of the Bosphorus, by choosing this part of Istanbul as your base, you will be trading both convenience and cost savings. But if staying along the Bosphorus (on the European side) is serene and spectacular, the hotels of the Asian side are even more so, because they benefit from the slower pace of this primarily residential grouping of neighborhoods, and because from this side of the Bosphorus, the views include many of the first-tier sights you came here for. The hotels listed provide scheduled boat-shuttle service to the European side.

A'jia ★★ The contemporary design of this sleek and stylish romantic getaway carries this traditional Ottoman *yalı* into the 21st century. In the 1970s, the house was converted into an elementary school (in fact, students still drop by to have a look). Accommodations are all about the views, with beds facing large arched or picture windows. Ergonometric king-size beds, oversize goose-feather pillows, and massive bathtubs beckon newlyweds. The mezzanine suite (with the tub next to the bed) is host to many

a romantic interlude; the management recently obliged by pasting rose petals on the glass to spell out "will you marry me?" The hotel spoils its mostly Turkish guests with services that include in-room Thai massage, private complimentary boat shuttle, a waterfront sun deck, a butler, and a major non-sequitor: meeting facilities.

Ahmet Rasim Paşa Yalısı, Çubuklu Cad. 27, 34684 Kanlıca. ✆ **0216/413-9300.** Fax. 0216/413-9355. www.ajiahotel.com. 16 units. 230€–300€ double and suite. Breakfast 15€. Tax not included. AE, MC, V. Valet parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant (p. 120); bar; airport transfer (110€); concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, DVD player, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Sumahan ★★★ Moments From an *ispirito fabrikası* for the production of *soma* (grain alcohol, today more benignly called ethanol) to an idyllic retreat, the Sumahan (note the apt name) is a prime example of functional architectural preservation. Mark and Nedret Butler met while studying architecture in America. When the Turkish State began proceedings to expropriate the land (owned by Nedret's family) in the 1970s, the Butlers, by then settled into their lives in Minneapolis, entered into a 30-year bureaucratic saga that ended in them relocating back to Istanbul. The rest is a story fit for *Architectural Digest,* with significant input from the Butlers' interior designer daughter, Yaşa. Apart from the understated luxury, highlights include duplexes, bathrooms swathed in the same Marmara marble found in Topkapı and Dolmabahçe, and a studied forethought even to the placement of the soaps. The hotel provides three complimentary shuttles per day to the Kabataş docks. Commuter boats from Çengelköy to Eminönü two times daily are a mere 200m (656 ft.) away.

Kuleli Cad. 51, 34684 Çengelköy. ✆ **0216/422-8000.** Fax 0216/422-8008. www.sumahan.com. 20 units. 240€ double; 280€–415€ suite. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; babysitting; exercise room; *hamam;* room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, CD/DVD player, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

7 NEAR THE AIRPORT

Frankly, there's really no need to stay near the airport, no matter how early or late your flight is, unless your destination is a conference. The only potential exceptions might be if you're flying on a holiday, if it's snowing, or in the event of unexpected delays both on the road to the airport and at the gate. Road tie-ups can drag a drive to the airport from Sultanahmet from 10 minutes to up to an hour. Traffic will be worse if you're staying around Taksim, along the Bosphorus, or on the Asian side.

Airport Hotel Located on the grounds of Istanbul's Atatürk Airport, this is a surefire way to make sure you don't miss your flight. It's also a godsend on long layovers between international flights, because you never have to exit Customs to check in. Not surprisingly, the hotel attracts lots of business travelers—the business center and executive meeting rooms make sure of that—but even the most sun-kissed vagabond will enjoy breakfast views of the runway. Rooms are pleasingly bright, airy, and unusually spacious, and offer high-tech amenities like TVs that show flight details and Wi-Fi. The hotel also offers rooms at hourly rates (for naps on long layovers and such) and a well-appointed fitness room for those crack-of-dawn workouts.

Atatürk Havalimanı Dış Hatlar Terminali, 34830 Yeşilköy. ✆ **0212/465-4030.** Fax 0212/465-4730. www.airporthotelistanbul.com. 85 units. 140€–180€ double runway side; 150€–220€ land side. Hourly rates available. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room (for a fee); room service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Sheraton Istanbul and Four Points by Sheraton If you have to stay near the airport, this is your best choice. The Sheraton Istanbul is at the Ataköy Marina, on the waterfront halfway between the airport (8km/5 miles) and the city center (10km/6 miles) and conveniently located pretty much at the Galleria Shopping Mall. Proving that the Sheraton knows pleasing design and comprehensive service, there isn't a (fee-based) amenity that they don't offer, from shoeshine, to an on-site drugstore, to the staff photographer. They do offer limited free shuttles into town. If you manage to score a package, it's probably worth it to book a room on the Club Floor, where you get normally fee-based amenities like bottled water, Wi-Fi, access to the fitness room, snacks, and complimentary breakfast, as well as a lounge and use of the fax, printer, and copier, for free.

Ataköy 34158. www.starwoodhotels.com. ✆ **888/625-5144** in the U.S. and Canada or 0212/413-0600. 285 units. 139€–235€ double. Rates exclude breakfast and tax. AE, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 3 bars; free airport transfer; babysitting; concierge; executive-level rooms; health club; Jacuzzi; indoor (heated) and outdoor pool; room service; sauna; smoke-free rooms; tennis courts. *In room*: A/C, satellite TV, minibar, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

6

Where to Dine

Turkish food has long been at the forefront of international cuisine thanks to its use of the freshest produce, the incorporation of flavors from the far reaches of the Ottoman Empire, and the Imperial Chef's fear of displeasing the sultan. But just because an eatery bills itself as serving Ottoman cuisine doesn't mean your taste buds are going to explode. This is because many restaurants cater to tourists while keeping the menu lean and mean, lacking anything really interesting. A week or two of grilled meat and you'll see what I mean. Lately, though, Istanbul has regained its place as a culinary destination with celebrity chefs from the U.K., the U.S., Sweden, Japan, and, of course, Turkey. The progressive kitchens led by these chefs are located north of the Golden Horn, but even without a visit to one of these cover-story kitchens, the better meals will be had up in the neighborhoods of Beyoğlu and Beşiktaş, and along the Bosphorus, and will be shared alongside Istanbullus.

For a discussion on Turkish cuisine, see p. 28.

1 BEST DINING BETS

While some ambitious new and atmospheric restaurants are popping up in the tourist-heavy Old City, Istanbul's real food renaissance is happening elsewhere. One of the more popular dining destinations is in and around the streets of **Asmalımescit,** in Beyoğlu, where boisterous *meyhanes,* bistros, and Mexican restaurants share the same stretch of real estate. Another popular option is the neighborhood of **Kumkapı,** on the southern tip of the historic peninsula, a year-round carnival crammed with typical *tavernas,* which benefits directly from the fish market across the highway. Appropriately, Kumkapı translates to "sand gate." Pick the restaurant with the most people or the freshest looking fish (reliable favorites are **Kalamar** ✆ **0212/517-1849;** and **Fener** ✆ **0212/516-4002**), and hold on to your valuables, as the dimly lit surrounding streets attract the worst petty thieves.

A good budget alternative is to descend upon one of the numerous (and hidden) *lokantas* (dives with steam tables), particularly along **Piyer Loti Caddesi,** between the Hippodrome and Cağaloğlu and in the streets around the Grand Bazaar.

For an overview of the city's best dining experiences, see p. 8.

- **Best Regional Cuisine:** Considered the best restaurant in Istanbul, the humble Kadıköy outpost that is **Çiya Sofrası,** Caferağa Mahallesi Güneşlibahçe Sok. 43 (✆ **0216/330-3190**), dishes out a palate-pleasing variety of traditional home cooking from Turkey's southern region that leaves your taste buds begging for more.
- **Best Ottoman Cuisine:** While Turkish and Ottoman cuisine seem to have merged into indistinguishable categories, a few noteworthy restaurants have gone the extra mile with dishes that were actually served from the palace kitchens. Çırağan Palace's venerated and renovated **Tuğra,** Çırağan Palace Hotel Kempinski Istanbul, Çırağan Cad., Beşiktaş (✆ **0212/258-3377**), creates delectable interpretations of historical menus while **Asitane,** Kariye Camii Sok. 18, Edirnekapı (✆ **0212/534-8414**), was

A Restaurant Primer

The idiosyncrasies of a foreign culture can create some frustrating experiences, especially when they get in the way of eating. In Turkey, dining out in often boisterous groups has traditionally been the province of men, and a smoke-filled room that reeks of macho may not be the most relaxing prospect for a meal. A woman dining alone will often be whisked away to an upstairs "family salon," called the *aile salonu,* where—what else—families, and particularly single women (but men also), can enjoy a meal in peace and quiet. Take advantage of it, and don't feel discriminated against; it's there for your comfort.

Restaurants are everywhere, and although the name *restoran* was a European import used for the best establishments, nowadays practically every type of place goes by that name. Cheap, simple, and often the best of Turkish home cooking *(ev yemekleri)* can be had at a family-run place called a *lokanta,* where the food is often prepared in advance (and ready to serve, called *hazır yemek,* or "ready food") and presented in a steam table. If you don't see any ready-to-eat food or aren't sure, ask if they have any on offer that day: *"hazır yemek var mı?"* A *meyhane* is a tavern full of those smokin' Turks I mentioned earlier, whereas a *birahane* is a potentially unruly beer hall. Both are said to be inappropriate for ladies; however, in the past few years, the *meyhanes* have morphed into civilized locales for a fun and informal night out.

Now that you've picked the place, it's time to sit down and read the menu, right? Wrong. Not all restaurants automatically provide menus, instead offering whatever's seasonal or the specialty of the house. If you'd feel more comfortable

the first to work off of actual translations of historic recipes. The new and trendy **Topaz,** Inönü Cad. 50, Gümüssuyu (✆ **0212/249-1001**), takes these imperial culinary concepts and reinterprets them for a modern audience. See p. 119, 107, and 113, respectively.

- **Best Kebaps:** In Turkey, a kebap is much more than a slab of meat on a stick. Kebaps refer to a range of meat dishes, be they grilled, roasted, or in a casserole. The unexpected sleeper award goes to **Köşebaşı Ocakbaşı,** which has some of the best kebaps around in a classy yet unpretentious setting in Nişantaşı (Bronz Sok. 5; ✆ **0212/241-3434**). Not even the several outposts of **Develi,** Balıkpazarı (Samatya Fish Market), Gümüşyüzük Sok. 7, Samatya (✆ **0212/529-0833**), can compete with the quality of this regional Gaziantep cuisine and of the setting of the branch in Samatya. For years a favorite of the local and expat business crowd, **Borsa,** Lütfi Kırdar Convention Center, Harbiye (✆ **0212/232-4201**), continues to merit its crown with the expertly executed fundamentals of the Turkish kitchen. See p. 117, 108, and 117, respectively.
- **Best Bistro Menu:** As Istanbul's palate becomes more sophisticated, new dining spots appear with modern, healthy, and even intriguing flavors. New on the scene is the

with a menu, don't be shy about asking, and politely say, *"Menüyü var mı?"* This is also important if you would like to know what you're paying in advance.

The level of English proficiency may be a bit lower at restaurants (as is the pay and the staff longevity), but as long as you keep your requests simple, you should have little trouble making yourself understood.

Cold mezes (appetizers) are often brought over on a platter, and the protocol is to simply point at the ones you want. Don't feel pressured into accepting every plate the waiter offers (none of it is free) or into ordering a main dish; Turks often make a meal out of an array of cold and hot mezes alone. When ordering fresh fish, it's perfectly acceptable—actually, it's strongly advised—to visually inspect your fish and to have it weighed for cost; otherwise, you may wind up with not only the biggest fish in the kitchen, but also the biggest check at the register, since some catches go to auction at near 100TL per kilo. If the price is higher than you planned to pay, either choose a less expensive variety or ask the waiter if it's possible to buy only half. While we're on the subject of cost, many restaurants are now starting a new trend to separate your money from your wallet: charging a cover *(kuver)* of anywhere from 2TL to 9TL per person, presumably for the bread and water (which up until recently were free).

When you're bursting at the seams and ready to go, ask for the check by either saying *"hesap, lütfen,"* or by making the universal gesture of writing in midair. Gratuities are rarely included in the price of the meal, and 10% is a customary amount to leave as a tip.

restaurant of the **Istanbul Culinary Institute,** Meşrutiyet Cad. 59 (✆ **0212/251-2214**), melding the freshest ingredients into decidedly modern Turkish creations. **House Café,** Asmalımescit 9/1, Tünel (✆ **0212/245-9515**), Atiye Sok., Iskeçe Apt. 10/1, Teşvikiye (✆ **0212/259-2377**), and Salhane Sok. 1, Ortaköy (✆ **0212/227-2699**), takes the freshest essential basics of the Turkish cupboard and turns them into modern and healthy dishes. See p. 110 and 113, respectively.

- **Best *Meyhane*:** While still somewhat raucous, the traditional *meyhane* is no longer the eminent domain of the Turkish male species. Friends, families, couples, and large (very large) groups descend on **Gedikli,** Sofyalı Sok. 22 (✆ **0212/245-9622**), located in the buzzing nightlife bulls-eye that is Sofyalı Sokak. See p. 109.
- **Best Seafood:** As a city surrounded by bountiful seas, Istanbul suffers from an embarrassment of riches of seafood. Where do Istanbullus go for their grouper? **Poseidon,** Çevdetpaşa Cad. 58, Bebek (✆ **0212/287-9531**), tends toward the card-carrying socialites, while **Doğa Balık,** Akarsu Yokusu Cad. 44–46, Cihangir (✆ **0212/243-3656**), capitalizes on masterful mezes and twinkling nighttime panoramas. See p. 118 and 112, respectively.

2 RESTAURANTS BY CUISINE

Armenian
Gurme Boncuk ★★ (Asmalımescit, $$$, p. 113)

Asian
Banyan Seaside ★★ (Ortaköy, $$$, p. 119)

Bistro & Cafe
House Café (Tünel, Ortaköy, and Teşvikiye, $$$, p. 113)
Kantin ★ (Nişantaşı, $$, p. 117)
Limonlu Bahçe (Galatasaray, $$, p. 115)
Zencefil (Taksim, $, p. 112)

Black Sea
Refik ★ (Tünel, $$$, p. 114)

French
Café du Levant ★ (Sütlüce, $$$, p. 118)
Sarnıç (Sultanahmet, $$$$, p. 102)
Yeşil Ev ★ (Sultanahmet, $$$, p. 103)

Fusion
Banyan Seaside ★★ (Ortaköy, $$$, p. 119)

Georgian
Galata House ★ (Galata, $$, p. 116)

International
Midpoint ★ (Odakule, $$, p. 115)
Sekiz/Eight ★★ (Taksim, $$, p. 110)
Vogue ★★ (Beşiktaş, $$$, p. 119)

Italian
Beymen Brasserie (Nişantaşı, $$$, p. 116)
Da Mario ★★ (Etiler, $$$, p. 119)
Fes Café (Nuruosmaniye, $$, p. 106)
Flamm (Tünel, $$, p. 114)

Kebaps
Beyti (Florya, $$, p. 107)
Borsa ★★ (Harbiye, $$, p. 117)
Buhara 93 (Sultanahmet, $, p. 104)
Develi Restaurant ★★★ (Samatya, $$, p. 108)
Hamdi Et Lokantası (Eminönü, $$, p. 100)
Köfteçi Arnavut (Balat, $, p. 107)
Köşebaşı Ocakbaşı ★★★ (Nişantaşı, $$, p. 117)
Saray Muhallebiçileri (Beyoğlu, $, p. 112)
Zinhan (Eminönü, $$, p. 100)

Kosher
Carne (Şişli, $$, p. 117)

Mediterranean
A'jia ★ (Kanlıca, $$$$, p. 120)
Carne (Şişli, $$, p. 117)
Leb-i-Derya ★★ (Tünel, $$$, p. 114)
Mikla ★★ (Tepebaşı, $$$$, p. 109)
Seasons Restaurant ★★★ (Sultanahmet, $$$$, p. 103)
Topaz ★★ (Gümüşsuyu, $$, p. 113)

Mezes
Doğa Balık ★★ (Cihangir, $$, p. 112)
Sultanahmet Fish House ★ (Sultanahmet, $$, p. 104)

Ottoman
Asitane ★★★ (Edirnekapı, $$$, p. 107)
Feriye Restaurant ★★ (Ortaköy, $$$$, p. 118)
Hacı Baba Restaurant (Taksim, $$, p. 110)
The Han (Gülhane, $$, p. 104)

Key to Abbreviations: $$$$ = Very Expensive $$$ = Expensive $$ = Moderate $ = Inexpensive

Hünkar ★★ (Nişantaşı, $$, p. 117)
Konyalı Topkapı Sarayı Lokantası ★ (Sultanahmet, $$$, p. 103)
Orient Express Cafe (Sirkeci, $$, p. 100)
Tuğra ★★★ (Çırağan, $$$, p. 119)
Topaz ★★ (Gümüşsuyu, $$, p. 113)
Zeyrekhane (Zeyrek, $$, p. 107)

Patisserie

Saray Muhallebiçileri (Beyoğlu, $, p. 112)

Regional Turkish

Çiya Sofrası ★★★ (Kadıköy, $, p. 120)
Develi Restaurant ★★★ (Samatya, $$, p. 108)
Khorasanı Ocakbaşı ★ (Sultanahmet, $$, p. 104)
Kivahan (Galata, $, p. 116)
Köşebaşı Ocakbaşı ★★★ (Nişantaşı, $$, p. 117)
Ziya Şark Sofrası (Gülhane and Aksaray, $, p. 106)

Seafood

Balıkçı Sabahattin ★★★ (Cankurtaran, $$$$, p. 102)
Del Mare (Çengelköy, $$$$, p. 120)
Doğa Balık ★★ (Cihangir, $$, p. 112)
Fener (Kumkapı, $$$, p. 95)
Gedikli ★★ (Tünel, $$, p. 109)
Kalamar (Kumkapı, $$$, p. 95)
Malta Köşkü (Yıldız, $$, p. 119)
Poseidon ★★★ (Bebek, $$$$, p. 118)
Refik ★ (Tünel, $$$, p. 114)
Sultanahmet Fish House ★ (Sultanahmet, $$, p. 104)

Sushi

Vogue ★★ (Beşiktaş, $$$, p. 119)

Thai

Çok Çok ★★★ (Tepebaşı, $$$, p. 113)

Turkish

9 Ece Aksoy ★ (Tepebaşı, $$, p. 114)
Borsa ★★ (Harbiye, $$, p. 117)
Café Lokum (Sultanahmet, $$, p. 103)
Cennet (Çemberlitaş, $, p. 105)
Cenova (Galata, $, p. 116)
Darüzziyafe (Süleymaniye, $$, p. 106)
Demeti ★ (Cihangir, $$, p. 112)
Fatih Belediyesi Sosyal Tesisleri (Cankurtaran, $, p. 104)
Gurme Boncuk ★★ (Asmalımescit, $$$, p. 113)
Hacı Abdullah (Beyoğlu, $$$, p. 109)
The Han (Gülhane, $$, p. 104)
Istanbul Culinary Institute ★★ (Tepebaşı, $$, p. 110)
Konyalı Topkapı Sarayı Lokantası ★ (Sultanahmet, $$$, p. 103)
Köfteçi Hüseyin ★★ (Taksim, $, p. 110)
Malta Köşkü (Yıldız, $$, p. 119)
Orient Express Cafe (Sirkeci, $$, p. 100)
Otantik (Galatasaray, $, p. 115)
Pandeli Lokantası (Eminönü, $$, p. 100)
The Pudding Shop (Sultanahmet, $, p. 105)
Sarnıç (Sultanahmet, $$$$, p. 102)
Sultanahmet Köfteçısı (Sultanahmet, $, p. 105)
Tamara ★ (Sultanahmet, $, p. 106)
Yakup 2 (Tepebaşı, $$, p. 115)
Yeşil Ev ★ (Sultanahmet, $$$, p. 103)
Zeyrekhane (Zeyrek, $$, p. 107)

Vegetarian

Parsifal (Taksim, $, p. 112)
Zencefil (Taksim, $, p. 112)

SIRKECI & EMINÖNÜ

Moderate

Hamdi Et Lokantası KEBAPS Hamdi's southeastern kebaps will never come close to Develi Restaurant (p. 108), but this is a good alternative to the overpriced mediocrity of Pandeli Lokantası only steps from the entrance to the Egyptian Spice Market. The popular terrace views of Galata Tower and the Golden Horn add to the convenience of the location, and you can move to the cozy *şark* (Oriental-style seating area) for your after-dinner coffee or tea. Specialties include the *erikli kebap,* minced meat from a suckling lamb from which all of the fat has been cooked out, and the showcase *testi kebap,* a stew of diced meat, tomatoes, shallots, garlic, and green pepper cooked in a terra-cotta pot over an open fire and served tableside by breaking the pot (minimum 10 people, advance orders required). Hamdi caters to vegetarians with the vegetable kebap, spiced with parsley and garlic; don't pass up the *yuvarlama,* a flavorful yogurt soup with tiny rice balls served only at dinnertime.

Tahmis Cad., Kalçin Sok. 17 (set back behind the bus depot), Eminönü. ✆ **0212/528-0390.** www.hamdirestaurant.com.tr. Reservations suggested (required for dinner). Dress smart. Appetizers and main courses 6TL–22TL. AE, MC, V. Daily 11am–midnight. Closed 1st and last 3 days of Ramadan.

Orient Express Cafe Finds OTTOMAN/TURKISH Located next to track no. 1 of Sirkeci station, the Orient Express Cafe—a real find—is proof that you don't have to pay an arm and a leg for white tablecloths, good food, and nostalgia. The elegant niches with their large stained-glass window insets and the handsome clapboard ceiling take you back at least a century, although the decorator would have done well to scrap the enormous *Shining Time Station* oil painting on the wall. The limited but satisfying menu relies heavily on lamb, with a tender lamb shoulder as the chef's pride. If you're craving eggplant, order the *beğendili kebap,* cubes of flavorful beef atop a bed of eggplant purée (or was that ambrosia?). The crème caramel was a formidable substitute to an empty coffer of rice pudding, and the black-tie service was flawless.

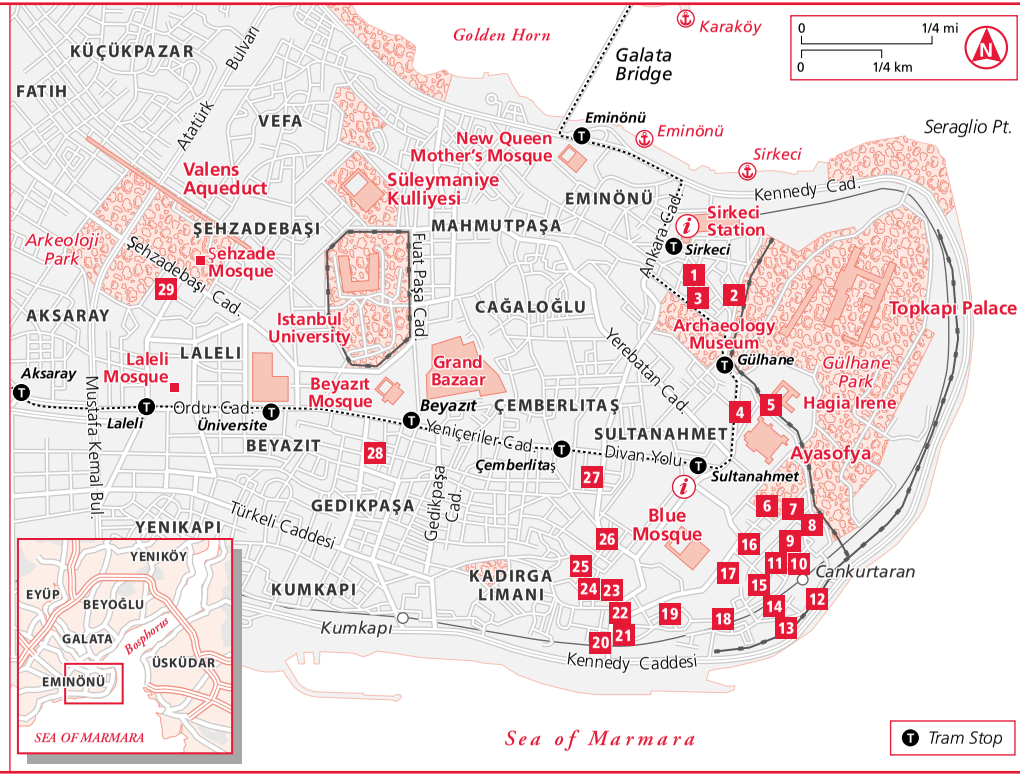
Sirkeci Train Station, Sirkeci. ✆ **0212/522-2280.** Reservations recommended. Appetizers and main courses 5TL–22TL. MC, V. Daily noon–11pm.

Pandeli Lokantası Overrated TURKISH Pandeli is one of those neighborhood traditions that is known more for its location and longevity than for anything particularly outstanding about the food. Pandeli was opened in 1901 by a Greek of Turkish descent and has become a local institution ever since its arrival on the upper level of the Egyptian Spice Bazaar. It's a popular place among businessmen on expense accounts as well as for bazaar shoppers looking for a place to eat. If you nab a table in the main room facing the ancient blue Iznik tiles and windows overlooking the bazaar, you can watch the human traffic come and go.

Mısır Çarşısı 1, Eminönü (immediately inside the entrance to the Egyptian Bazaar). ✆ **0212/527-3909.** Reservations recommended. Appetizers and main courses 6TL–28TL. MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–4pm.

Zinhan KEBAPS This 19th-century *zindan han* ("dungeon" or prison) on the docks of Eminönü was restored by the Storks chain of jewelry shops, which has filled the lower five stories with high-end retailers, and topped it all off with a panoramic restaurant on the sixth floor. And because the restaurant is set in a pentagon-shape pavilion with glass

- Apricot Hotel **15**
- Arena Hotel **25**
- Aruna Hotel **13**
- Avicenna **14**
- Ayasofya Konakları **5**
- Celal Ağa Konağı **29**
- Deniz Konak **20**
- Dersaadet Oteli **19**
- Eresin Crown Hotel **22**
- Fehmi Bey **26**
- Four Seasons Sultanahmet **6**
- Hotel Alp **8**
- Hotel Armada **12**
- Hotel Ayasofya **24**
- Hotel Empress Zoe **7**
- Hotel Erguvan **23**
- Hotel Niles **28**
- Mavi Ev (Blue House) **16**
- Naz Wooden House **18**
- Ottoman Imperial **4**
- Poem **10**
- Sapphire **1**
- Sarı Konak **11**
- Sirkeci Konak **2**
- Sude Konak **3**
- Sultan's Inn **21**
- Sultanahmet Palace Hotel **17**
- Sultanhan Hotel **27**
- Zeugma Hotel **9**



Tips Dining with a View

Restaurant dining rooms resemble ghost-town eateries in the summer, but if you just continue up the steps, you'll see why. Istanbul is a city of rooftop terraces, and summer dining is almost exclusively enjoyed high above the city accompanied by warm breezes and breathtaking panoramas. Top roofs in Sultanahmet include the restaurants in the **Armada, Eresin Crown,** and **Sultanhan** hotels, each with splendid vistas of the Ayasofya and the Blue Mosque. Over in Eminönü, **Hamdi** and **Zindan** restaurants sit atop the bustle of the Golden Horn facing the Galata Tower. In Beyoğlu head to **Midpoint,** at Odakule, **360, Leb-i-Derya, Mikla,** or the rooftop at **NuPera** for panoramas of the domes, minarets, and rooftops of the city. **House Café** and **Banyan Seaside** offer front-row seats to the charm of Ortaköy, while any Bosphorus village restaurant has the power to dazzle, by day or by night.

walls, the 360-degree panorama alone is giving the nearby Hamdi (see above) a run for its money. Zinhan specializes in kebaps typical of Southern Anatolia and is already a mandatory lunch stop on personalized day tours that have the Egyptian Spice Market on its itinerary.

Ragıpgümüşpala Cad. 2–5 (the tall building at Eminönü with the Storks sign on it), Eminönü. ✆ **0212/512-4275.** Reservations recommended. Appetizers and main courses 6TL–28TL. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight.

IN & AROUND SULTANAHMET

Very Expensive

Balıkçı Sabahattin ★★★ SEAFOOD One of the few consistently good, high-quality restaurants in a neighborhood of amateurs, Balıkçı Sabahattin is still cranking out top-quality treasures from the sea for eager fans. Meals are served alfresco on the cobbled streets in summer. When the air turns crisp, diners fill the many rooms of this restored 1927 house. Don't pass up the tahini ice cream, and what you can't finish you can feed to one of the hungry kittens milling about.

Seyit Hasan Koyu Sok. 1 Cankurtaran, Sultanahmet (behind Armada Hotel). ✆ **0212/458-1824.** www.balikcisabahattin.com. Reservations recommended. Appetizers and main courses 4TL–35TL and up for fish by weight. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 7–10:30pm.

Sarnıç Moments Overrated FRENCH/TURKISH The setting for this restaurant, an old Roman cistern tucked away behind the Ayasofya, is nothing less than dramatic. The flickering light of 500 candles bounces off the iron grillwork, the lofty brick domes, and the stone pillars, while the crackling of the fire in the massive stone chimney (an inauthentic but effective addition) supplies more romance than a girl can handle. Only a few years ago, before the Turkish Touring and Automobile Association bought and restored it, the cistern served as a greasy, old auto-repair shop.

The menu marries traditional French entrees like beef bourguignon with standard Turkish grills. But while the service is good and the ambience is great, my experience there was (twice) reminiscent of a large institutional wedding (except for the marinated beef salad, which was truly memorable). Perhaps, then, it is a hit-or-miss thing.

Soğukçeşme Sok., Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/512-4291.** www.ayasofyapensions.com/sarnic.asp. Reservations required. Dress smart. Appetizers and main courses 10TL–50TL. AE, MC, V. Daily 6pm–midnight; lunch available for groups only.

Seasons Restaurant ★★★ MEDITERRANEAN Rated no. 1 in Zagat's "Best of Europe" since the book first came out, the Four Seasons' restaurant continues to be a favorite, not only for expats and foreign visitors, but for locals as well. The menus are adapted to seasonal offerings approximately every 3 months and the Sunday brunch is a very popular local affair.

In the Four Seasons Hotel (p. 72), Tevkifhane Sok. 1, Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/638-8200.** www.fourseasons.com. Reservations required. Dress smart. Appetizers and main courses 18TL–38TL. AE, DC, MC, V. Sun 7–11:30am and noon–3pm, Mon–Sat 6:30–11am and noon–2:30pm; daily 7–11pm.

Expensive

Konyalı Topkapı Sarayı Lokantası ★ OTTOMAN/TURKISH Diners at Topkapı are treated to a stunningly situated stopover on a short walk through history. Don't confuse the casual cafeteria with the formal restaurant, the latter being where all the culinary action is. Konyalı has been serving celebrity royalty for more than 100 years, and it's got the black-and-white photographs to prove it. Some of the specialties of the house are their *börek,* the slow-cooked *tandır* lamb, and orange baklava. Konyalı also has a second location at the Kanyon shopping center in Levent (✆ **0212/353-0450;** daily noon–1am).

Topkapı Palace, Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/513-9696.** www.konyalilokantasi.com. Main courses 9TL–32TL; does not include entrance fee to the palace. AE, MC, V. Wed–Mon 8:30am–4:30pm.

Yeşil Ev ★ FRENCH/TURKISH Located in one of the first reconstructed replicas of an Ottoman mansion in Sultanahmet, the Yeşil Ev restaurant takes full advantage (in the summertime) of the luxurious setting provided by the enclosed garden and grand fountain. The Ottoman/French menu includes a decent duck *à l'orange,* the one-time selection of choice for the visit of France's prime minister. Although reputed as one of the top restaurants in Istanbul, meals here sometimes get mixed reviews. The elegant *orangerie* is open in good weather only (in winter for groups of eight or more).

In the Yeşil Ev hotel, Kabasakal Cad. 5, Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/517-6785.** www.istanbulyesilev.com. Reservations recommended. Dress smart. Appetizers and main courses 9TL–30TL; prawn and fish by weight. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–11pm.

Moderate

Café Lokum TURKISH Centrally located on the pedestrian street adjacent to the park housing the Milion Stone, Café Lokum is the perfect little new place to rest and restore. There's a smart and tiny brick- and glass-enclosed dining area and a few airy tables lining the walkway connecting the Ayasofya with Yerebatan Sarnıçı. Location and ambience, check. I stopped in for a light snack and wound up sampling a variety of soups

Tips Also in Topkapı Palace . . .

The 19th-century **Imperial Police Station,** now restored as a restaurant venue, provides visitors to Topkapı Palace with a second dining option (technically) inside the palace walls.

and salads, all top-notch. (They also have a cross section of Turkish specialties, plus the requisite fish and chips; in fact, fries are served with almost everything.) With no room for dessert, I nevertheless devoured the baklava (superb) and their very own homemade *lokum*—light-years better than the gummy Turkish Delight available in the markets—topped with a generous dollop of *kaymak.*

Şeftali Sok. 14, Sultanahmet (small street connecting Divanyolu and Yerebatan Cad. near the Yerebatan Cistern). ✆ **0212/528-2117.** www.cafelokum.com. Main courses 9TL–22TL. AE, MC, V. Daily 8am–midnight.

The Han (Moments) OTTOMAN/TURKISH You've come all this way for something "authentic," right? Whatever that means, the Han has it, with its traditional Ottoman and Turkish staples served against an Anatolian catchall backdrop of horse carts, *kilims,* carpets, embroidery, and the requisite village matriarch hand-rolling the dough for hot-off-the-presses *gözleme.* Kitschy costumed and fez-topped roving musicians round out the restaurant's theme. Unimpressed? Then they also own the **Semaver Nargile Café** next door at no. 28 (and the kebap house near the Gülhane tramway stop). If you're looking for something a bit quieter, the **Sultan Mehmet Café and Restaurant** next door at no. 24/A (✆ **0212/519-6289**) has a reliable kitchen and pleasing atmosphere.

Alemdar Cad. Soğuk Çeşme Sok. 26, Gülhane (opposite the Gülhane Park entrance gate). ✆ **0212/526-6262.** Main courses 7TL–18TL. MC, V. Daily 8am–midnight; later on summer weekends.

Khorasanı Ocakbaşı ★ REGIONAL TURKISH This new, smart standout in a sea of mediocrity brings not only good food, but good recipes from the Gaziantep and Antakya regions of Southeast Anatolia to the neighborhood. The hooded barbecue (that's the *ocakbaşı*) dominates the entryway, a precursor to such perfumes as the hazelnut *lahmacun,* thyme salad, and spicy kebaps emanating from the kitchen. Twin rows of white cloth-clad tables line the narrow brick-walled space, and the slick bar area at the back lends the entire space a metropolitan feel. For those wishing for a more front-row experience, there are three seats at the barbecue and plenty of outdoor cafe seating.

Divanyolu Cad. Ticarethane Sok. 39/41, Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/519-5959.** www.khorasanirestaurant.com. Reservations recommended on weekends. Main courses 13TL–20TL. AE, MC, V. Daily 11am–midnight; later on summer weekends.

Sultanahmet Fish House ★ MEZES/SEAFOOD After taking over the management of the Sultanahmet Fish House, Yaşar, Özlem, and Ercan, three veterans in hospitality, turned this obscure fish house into a quality kitchen for above-average Aegean and Mediterranean specialties. The two cozy dining areas are split among the building's two stories, warmed by the subtle and colorful lighting from dozens of handmade lanterns. There's a full bar to accompany the menu, a parade of typical Aegean mezes along with the catch of the day. My eyes and belly were pleasantly surprised by the fish balls, calamari salad, and lentil *köfte* not usually found on menus, while the salt-baked fish, their specialty and my first foray into this preparation, was succulent.

Prof. Ismail Gürkan Cad. 14 (continuation of Yerebatan Cad.), Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/527-4441.** www.sultanahmetfishhouse.com. Reservations suggested. Appetizers and main courses 6TL–21TL. AE, MC, V. Daily 11am–11pm (closes earlier in winter).

Inexpensive

Buhara 93 KEBAPS For some pretty good, cheap, basic Turkish fare, Buhara is an old reliable. I tend to stick to the *ev yemekleri* (home cooking)—the stewed dishes displayed

in the window. Make your choice and then head on up to the restaurant's rooftop terrace. Note that the menu narrows to serve only kebaps during Ramadan.

Nakilbent Sok. 15A, Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/518-1511.** www.buhara93restaurant.com. Main courses 4TL–10TL. MC, V. Daily 9am–10pm.

Cennet (Kids) TURKISH One of the first places in town to serve up touristy kitsch with your meal, Cennet, now in its new digs on Divanyolu, encourages silly behavior such as posing for a photo op in one of the available Grand Vezir robes or turbans. The food is adequate enough, but the real reasons to stop here are the traditional Turkish decor, the low seating, and the aproned women sitting cross-legged in the middle of the floor rolling out dough for gözleme (cheese, potato, or vegetable-filled crepes). Other village-like menu items include Turkish ravioli, omelets, and a small selection of meat dishes. The waitstaff dresses in the costumes of earlier centuries, and visitors are encouraged to don one of the spare outfits for the duration of dinner. There's live music, and yes, it's touristy, but hey, are you here to avoid this kind of thing?

Divanyolu Cad. 31/A, Çemberlitaş. ✆ **0212/518-8111.** Main courses 5TL–12TL. MC, V. Daily 8am–midnight.

Fatih Belediyesi Sosyal Tesisleri (Value) (Finds) TURKISH The security guards sporadically stationed at the gated entrance aren't exactly an inviting presence, but this is indeed one of the neighborhood's finds. It's actually a combined tea garden and restaurant, placed strategically on an outdoor terrace that makes up part of the ancient Byzantine fortress wall. The small dining room at the back of the grounds serves traditional Turkish meals and spills out onto the breezy ramparts in summertime. Because it's owned by the municipality—presumably the reason for the guards—this destination is bone-dry (no alcohol).

Ahırkapı Iskele Sok. 1, Cankurtaran (near the Armada Hotel, under the train tracks at the Dede Efendi entrance to the neighborhood from the sea road). ✆ **0212/458-5415.** Appetizers and main courses 3TL–12TL. MC, V. Daily 11am–midnight.

The Pudding Shop (Overrated) TURKISH In its heyday, the Pudding Shop was an obligatory stop on the "hippie trail," a starting point for restless vagabonds from the West on their way through the exotic East. With its anti-establishment clientele, it wasn't long before it gained the reputation of ground zero for drug dealings and other unsavory business propositions—in Oliver Stone's *Midnight Express,* Billy Hayes gives up his cabdriver supplier here. Today, the Pudding Shop fades into history alongside the other fast-food restaurants on Divanyolu Caddesi, with fluorescent backlit menu displays and stacks of expat publications. Turkish and Ottoman staples are pre-prepared and displayed in steam tables behind a counter; just point at what looks good. The menu features stuffed grape leaves, lentil-stuffed eggplant/aubergine, as well as *köfte* and *şiş,* but you should get these last two things next door at the Sultanahmet Köfteçısı (see below), if that's what you plan on ordering.

Divanyolu Cad. 6 (across from the tram), Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/522-2970.** www.puddingshop.com. Appetizers and main courses 4TL–13TL. AE, MC, V. Daily 7am–11pm.

Sultanahmet Köfteçısı ★★ (Kids) (Value) TURKISH This little, quality dive on the main drag has been around longer than Turkey has been a republic, and after one bite it's easy to see why. It's hard to imagine a simple meatball as delectable as the ones made here, but if you're not in the mood, there's not much in the way of an alternative. They also

serve lamb *şiş* for 9TL, but here, it's beside the point. Side dishes are limited to white beans or a shepherd's salad (tomato, cucumber, onions, and chili). Top the meal off with the *irmik helvası,* a modestly sweet semolina comfort food beloved by Turks.

Divanyolu Cad. 12/A, Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/513-1438.** www.sultanahmetkoftesi.com. *Köfte* 7TL. No credit cards. Daily noon–10pm.

Tamara ★ Finds Value TURKISH After 2 successful years at no. 4, Tamara was forced to move down the street to bigger digs. This four-story plus penthouse eatery features the same, unusually broad selection of kebaps, *pides,* and salads. But even with these choices, my advice is to order one of the stew-like regional dishes (ask for the "*ana yemekleri*"). One such delight is *keldoş*—a delicious concoction of lentils and beef à la Van from Eastern Turkey. Or the *orman* (forest) *kebap*—a stew of lamb, chickpeas, potatoes, and carrots.

Küçük Ayasofya Cad. 14, Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/518-4666.** www.tamararestaurant.com. Appetizers and main courses 4TL–14TL. AE, MC, V. Daily 9am–11pm.

Ziya Şark Sofrası REGIONAL TURKISH This veritable emporium of Anatolian regional cuisine has me breathing a sigh of relief now that it has added this Old City spot to its numerous locations (which included the next nearest restaurant over in the dubious neighborhood of Aksaray). It doesn't have that blow-you-awayness that Çiya has, or the consistency of Develi, but it's close, convenient, and reliably good. The appetizers are anything but ordinary: Try the *cevizli muhammara* (walnuts and hot spice) or the stuffed mushrooms. A sampling of the kebaps includes pistachio, tomato, spicy, and eggplant. In general, Ziya is very popular, so even with a reservation, there might be a bit of a wait.

Alemdar Cad. 28/A, Gülhane. ✆ **0212/512-7750.** Also at Millet Cad. 1, Ender Mağazası Yanı, Aksaray; ✆ **0212/632-8479.** www.ziyasark.com.tr. Reservations suggested. Appetizers and main courses 4TL–17TL. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–10pm.

AROUND THE GRAND BAZAAR

Moderate

Darüzziyafe TURKISH Darüzziyafe is actually the banqueting hall built by Sinan on orders of the sultan in preparation for the 100-year anniversary of the conquest of the city. There are three large dining rooms plus an ornamental courtyard shaded in centuries-old trees. The kitchen serves an endless menu of traditional and regional dishes, including those that extended into the four corners of the empire, from the Balkan soup to the Üzbek pilaf. The menu also features a daunting array of boiled, braised, and pickled vegetables.

Şifahane Sok. 6, Süleymaniye. ✆ **0212/511-8414.** Reservations recommended. Appetizers and main courses 6TL–20TL. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–11pm.

Fes Café ITALIAN The original Fez Café began as a tiny cafe serving much-needed caffeine and sugar for the boost required to make it through a grueling day wandering the Grand Bazaar. This second location, tucked just outside of the Nuruosmaniye Gate, sets the bar slightly higher with a sophisticated menu of Italian dishes and street-side dining. While the chef is boiling your pasta, you can step into the adjacent shop selling a selection of some of the most sumptuous bath sheets and copper *hamam* bowls in the bazaar.

Ali Baba Türbesi Sok. 25–27, Nuruosmaniye. ✆ **0212/526-3070.** Appetizers and main courses 7TL–18TL. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 9am–11pm.

BALAT

Köfteçi Arnavut KEBAPS The Uştay family has been serving meatballs to the residents of Balat since 1947. And in Turkey, any *köfteci* able to survive that long must be able to compete in the city's meatball wars for title of "the best." Certainly the two-story brick building looks as if it's been there at least twice as long, but the wear and tear of the building simply adds to the charm of the spot (which is clean inside, by the way). If meatballs are not your thing, Köfteçi Arnavut also has basic Turkish staples like *arnavut ciğeri* (fried cubes of lamb's liver that will win over the palate of most any liver hater) and soups/stews.

Mürselpaşa Cad. 139, Balat. ✆ **0212/531-6652.** Main courses around 7TL. MC, V. Daily 11am–2pm (or whenever the food runs out).

FATIH

Zeyrekhane OTTOMAN/TURKISH Just a few short years ago, Zeyrekhane became the destination of choice for the few foreign visitors intrepid enough to seek out neighborhoods beyond the historic center. The neighborhood of Zeyrek, for centuries a major Byzantine religious hub, is now attracting the mainstream visitor, but Zeyrekhane still holds its own as a charismatic rest stop. The restaurant sits atop the Byzantine walls, opening up to a massive paved terrace just a few steps below with incredible views. The interior is all cool stone and enormous brick. The menu gets mixed reviews, so stick with the tried-and-true standards like the *saç böreği* (fried pastries with meat or cheese) and the *Zeyrek kebap* (diced and minced meat on *pide* covered in yogurt).

Sinanağa Mah., Ibadethane Arkası Sok. 10, Zeyrek/Fatih. ✆ **0212/532-2778.** www.zeyrekhane.com. Reservations recommended. Appetizers and main courses 8TL–19TL. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sun 11am–10pm.

EDIRNEKAPI

Asitane ★★★ Value OTTOMAN Clearly, it was good to be the sultan, if he indeed ate at all like you do when you visit Asitane. From records of meals at Topkapı Palace (*sans* quantities) and delving into the memoirs of foreign diplomats of the time, the chef of Asitane has succeeded in re-creating 200 palace recipes plus about 200 original Ottoman-style recipes. The *etli elma dolması* (apple stuffed with lean diced lamb, rice, currants, pistachio, and rosemary) still makes my mouth water—the only regrettable thing is that I'll probably never eat it again, because the menu changes each season. There's a menu in honor of Fatih Sultan Mehmet (the Conqueror) May through June, while vegetarian main-course selections are on the menu year-round.

In the Kariye Oteli, Kariye Camii Sok. 18 (adjacent to the St. Savior in Chora), Edirnekapı. ✆ **0212/534-8414.** www.asitanerestaurant.com. Reservations required. Dress smart. Appetizers and main courses 12TL–35TL. AE, DISC, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight.

FROM SAMATYA TO THE AIRPORT

Beyti KEBAPS One of Istanbul's most revered "meat restaurants," Beyti began as a humble eatery of four tables in 1945 and has since grown to encompass 11 richly decorated "salons" and a garden patio. At its peak (which it has yet to come off of), Beyti served princes, kings, presidents, and movie stars. Beyti was even at one time the supplier for the now-defunct Pan Am Airlines in-flight meals, as well as Air Force One, when Nixon was the aircraft's primary client. The house specialty is the restaurant's namesake: lamb filets wrapped in lamb fat and grilled.

Orman Sok. 8, Florya. ✆ **0212/663-2990.** Reservations required. Appetizers and main courses 6TL–22TL. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sun 11:30am–midnight.

Tips Eating Your Way through the Streets of Istanbul

The fastest way to the heart of a culture is through its stomach, and often the culture of food begins on the street. While this book provides some counsel on what to avoid, I rarely take my own advice and simply can't think of anything I'd rather do in Istanbul than nosh through its bustling streets (if they're not bustling, it might be better not to eat there).

Morning rush hour in Turkey wouldn't be the same without the sound of the neighborhood ***simitçi*** hawking his wares. A *simit* is a savory sesame-covered pastry much like a bagel, only thinner (the *simitçi* being the guy who sells *simit*). I've always frequented the guy who stakes out his spot daily on the small triangle of sidewalk located at the entrance to Bankalar Sokağı, in Karaköy. Ask for a packet of *peyner* (cheese), the equivalent of a do-it-yourself schmeer.

Down the street at the Karaköy Pier is the humble (and famous) **Güllüoğlu** sweet shop, where you'll find the best *su boreği*—a buttery cheese- or meat-filled flaky pastry that's feathery and delicious, and a frequent staple of the Turkish breakfast. Güllüoğlu also keeps their glass cases full of baklava. Grab a slab to go and munch on this buttery wonder outside on a bench by the cruise-ship docks.

All day long, vendors cloaked in Ottoman dress man the helms of boats bobbing wharfside at Eminönü, greeting arriving commuters and locals with **grilled fish** on a roll. It's fresh, quick, authentic, and at 3TL, cheap. The **Tarıhı Eminönü Balıkçısı** is the original.

On your stroll along Istiklal Caddesi or through the Balıkpazarı (Galatasaray Fish Market), you'll be hard-pressed not to be distracted by the odors coming from the few fast-food vendors displaying ***döner kebap*** (shwarma) on a vertical spit or oversize shallow pans full of cubed meat. The latter is ***tantuni,*** stir-fried beef cubes served in a wrap. Sounds pretty unspectacular, but it's anything but.

Up in Ortaköy, stands displaying heaps of diced meats and vegetables, condiments and spreads, and ready-made salads line the street leading from the main road to the pier. These goodies are actually filling for **potatoes** (called *kümpir*). All you have to do is point at the things you want (some of which may be a bit of a stretch for a potato topping). Just grab a plastic fork (provided) and stake out a seat on a waterfront bench. For those with culinary abandon or simply stomachs of steel, those stuffed **mussels** on offer opposite the potato stands are actually quite delicious. Admittedly, though, these require a great leap of faith.

The seasons also usher in or out some street-food staples. In summer, corn-on-the-cob corpses dot the Eminönü wharf; in winter, chestnuts roast on open fires around town.

Develi Restaurant ★★★ KEBAPS/REGIONAL TURKISH Develi's success may have translated into a blossoming of sister locations around the country (and a preponderance of English-speaking expat clientele), but no matter how good the others may be,

this Develi maintains a level of consistency and fabulousness worthy of more than a simple star rating will allow. For their regional specialties, they follow outstanding recipes from the Gaziantep region of southeastern Turkey—this translates roughly as *blisteringly spicy.* Adventurous eaters should order the fiery *çig köfte,* beefy meatballs combined with every spice in the book, served raw in a soothing lettuce leaf. Other notable menu items include the *muhammara,* a delectable purée of bread, nuts, and chickpeas; the *findik lahmacun,* a thin-crust pizza made Turkish-style with chopped lamb; or the lamb sausage and pistachio kebap. Leave room for the *künefe,* a warm slab of baklava dough oozing cheese, dipped in syrup, and covered with crushed pistachio nuts. The rooftop terrace is stupendous in the summer.

Balıkpazarı (Samatya Fish Bazaar), Gümüşyüzük Sok. 7, Samatya. ✆ **0212/529-0833.** Also at Tepecik Yolu 22, Etiler, ✆ **0212/263-2571.** www.develikebap.com. Reservations required. Dress smart. Appetizers and main courses 5TL–22TL. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight.

4 BEYOĞLU

TAKSIM

Very Expensive

Mikla ★★ MEDITERRANEAN On the top floors of the new Marmara Pera hotel (p. 86), Mikla is the newest hit of the Istanbul Yiyecek Icecek A.S. ("eat drink") ventures. The Swedish-born chef, Mehmet Gürs, is somewhat of an Istanbul celebrity by now; he settled in Istanbul in the 1990s and has made all of the kitchens he's touched turn to gold. Reservations are hard to come by and the wait for a table is long; the management makes it easy with the upstairs bar views of the lights of the Old City. Raw grouper makes an outstanding appetizer, followed by the roast beef tenderloin for two. Try to leave space for the memorable pistachio and tahini ice cream.

Mesrutyiyet Cad. 167–185, Tepebaşı. ✆ **0212/293-5656.** www.miklarestaurant.com. Reservations required. Appetizers and main courses 17TL–55TL. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–3:30pm and 6–11:30pm.

Expensive

Hacı A bdullah TURKISH Politicians, businessmen, families, and out-of-towners have been coming to Istanbul's first licensed restaurant for over a century. The recipes reflect the best of traditional Turkish cuisine, serving substantial stews, whole artichokes baked with vegetables in olive oil, and their signature dish, lamb shank with eggplant. Lining the walls are enormous glass jars filled with fruit compotes made on the premises and incorporated into the chef's proud desserts, such as quince marinated in syrup or the sweetbread custard topped with figs, apricot, pistachio, and coconut. For those wishing to celebrate with a glass of wine, unfortunately, Hacı Abdullah serves no alcohol.

Sakizağacı Cad. 17, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/293-8561.** www.haciabdullah.com.tr. Reservations suggested. Appetizers and main courses 9TL–34TL. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–10:30pm; later on weekends.

Moderate

Gedikli ★★ Finds SEAFOOD The lively chatter coming from packed outdoor tables confirms that Gedikli is indeed the latest word among locals for good food, good fun, and good prices. The *meyhane* specializes in fresh fish grilled, steamed, or fried. Fish is preceded by mezes that pass the discerning muster of local palates. The restaurant is the centerpiece of Sofyalı Street, where Istanbul's middle class heads in droves on warm summer's eves. If a whole fish looks daunting, try the *hamsi* (anchovy) stew.

Sofyalı Sok. 22, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/245-9622.** Reservations suggested. Set menu 40TL. AE, MC, V. Daily 4pm–1am.

Hacı Baba Restaurant OTTOMAN Many restaurants in Istanbul advertise themselves as serving Ottoman cuisine, but few of them actually do. This is one of the actual authentic kitchens, and in this simple second-floor dining room, the food makes up for the decor. The mezes and a variety of ready-to-grill kebaps are displayed at the entrance, but you can also request to see the baked goods in the kitchen to get an idea of what it is you're actually up against. Perhaps the enormous lamb tenderloins with rice spiced with liver and raisins, or crepes stuffed with lamb and cheese?

Istiklal Cad. 49, Beyoğlu (across from the French Embassy). ✆ **0212/244-1886.** www.hacibabarest.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses 8TL–25TL. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight.

Istanbul Culinary Institute ★★ (Value) TURKISH While still in training, chefs who apprentice at some of the city's finer restaurants create the seasonal menu for the on-site restaurant. All of the fresh produce comes from the director's farm in Saros, and the olive oil arrives direct from a neighboring olive grove on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Menu offerings change on a daily basis (the menu is updated daily on the website), but to give you an idea of what to expect, my experience was with the basil and wheat-berry soup, a delicious baked mackerel in white-wine sauce, and zucchini fritters, accompanied by a basket of just-out-of-the-oven baked items. To boot, four or five better types of Turkish wines are put on the menu each week, allowing diners to sample some of the country's better wines by the glass.

Meşrutiyet Cad. 59, Tepebaşı. ✆ **0212/251-2214.** www.istanbulculinary.com. Reservations suggested. Main courses 8TL–16TL. MC, V. Mon–Fri 7:30am–6pm.

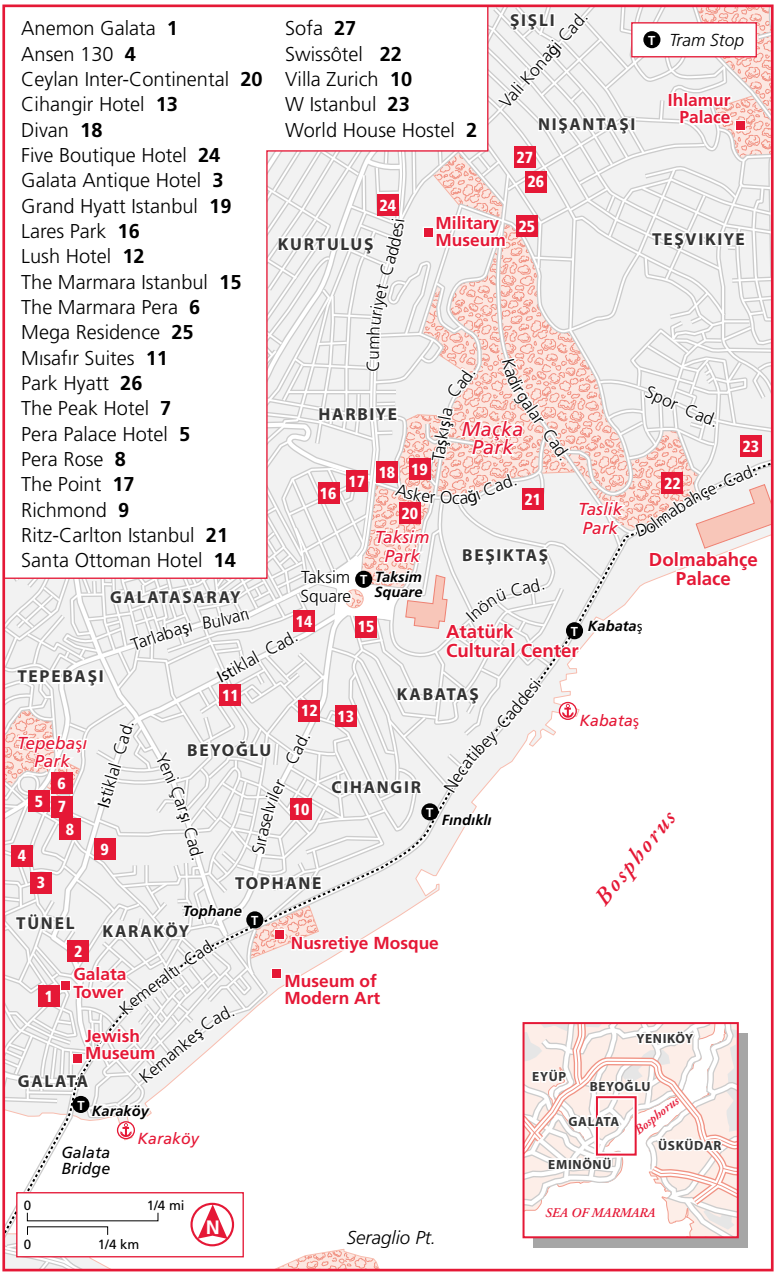
Sekiz/Eight ★★ INTERNATIONAL Joost, Sekiz's owner, apologized for the fact that the kitchen was working out a few kinks when I ate here, which basically means that Sekiz is destined for greatness, because I had some darn good meals. The open kitchen puts out delicious crispy spring rolls with a piquant dipping sauce, chicken satay, and vegetable samosas. But it's not all Asian; choose the marinated swordfish or lamb skewer, a grilled fish sandwich, or a hefty slab of steak. And Joost's wife, Sercem, makes a New York cheesecake that comes perilously close to the best I've ever had (Mom, yours is still #1); I was sorry to have offered to share. The bar/restaurant has a hip, cosmopolitan vibe; that it is hidden down a back street near Taksim Square in an unmarked building just makes it all the more fashionable.

In Mısafır Suites (p. 82), Gazeteci Erol Dernek Sok. 1, Beyoğlu (from the Ağa Mosque on Istiklal, turn down Sadir Alışık Sok.). ✆ **0212/249-8930.** Reservations recommended. Appetizers and main courses 8TL–24TL. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–10:30pm. Bar open until the wee hours.

Inexpensive

Kofteçi Hüseyin ★★ (Value) TURKISH From a tiny pushcart 45 years ago to a storefront near Taksim Square, Köfteçi Hüseyin (now run by Hüseyin's two sons) is considered among the *köfte* cognoscenti as the place to eat Turkish meatballs. And Turks do take their meatballs seriously. The secret here is really no secret at all: more meat and less filler. It's also cooked medium rare. The result is a ball that's charred on the outside and plump and juicy on the inside. If you're going to do it right, order the staple accompaniment of *piyaz,* a vinegary salad of white beans and onions.

Kurabiye Sok. Akgün Iş Hanı 11, Taksim. ✆ **0212/243-7637.** Köfte 7TL. MC, V. Daily noon–10pm.


Anemon Galata 1
Ansen 130 4
Ceylan Inter-Continental 20
Cihangir Hotel 13
Divan 18
Five Boutique Hotel 24
Galata Antique Hotel 3
Grand Hyatt Istanbul 19
Lares Park 16
Lush Hotel 12
The Marmara Istanbul 15
The Marmara Pera 6
Mega Residence 25
Mısafır Suites 11
Park Hyatt 26
The Peak Hotel 7
Pera Palace Hotel 5
Pera Rose 8
The Point 17
Richmond 9
Ritz-Carlton Istanbul 21
Santa Ottoman Hotel 14
Sofa 27
Swissôtel 22
Villa Zurich 10
W Istanbul 23
World House Hostel 2
Tram Stop
ŞIŞLI
Vali Konağı Cad.
NIŞANTAŞI
Ihlamur Palace
KURTULUŞ
Military Museum
TEŞVIKIYE
Cumhuriyet Caddesi
Taşkışla Cad.
Kadırgalar Cad.
Spor Cad.
HARBIYE
Maçka Park
Askeri Ocağı Cad.
Taslik Park
Dolmabahçe Cad.
Dolmabahçe Palace
Taksim Square
Taksim Square
BEŞIKTAŞ
İnönü Cad.
GALATASARAY
Tarlabaşı Bulvarı
Atatürk Cultural Center
Kabataş
TEPEBAŞI
İstiklal Cad.
KABATAŞ
Kabataş
Tepebaşı Park
BEYOĞLU
Yeni Çarşı Cad.
Sıraselviler Cad.
CIHANGIR
Necatibey Caddesi
Fındıklı
Bosphorus
TOPHANE
TÜNEL
KARAKÖY
Tophane
Nusretiye Mosque
Museum of Modern Art
Galata Tower
Kemeraltı Cad.
Jewish Museum
Kemankeş Cad.
GALATA
Karaköy
Karaköy
Galata Bridge
0 1/4 mi
0 1/4 km
N
Seraglio Pt.
YENIKÖY
EYÜP
BEYOĞLU
GALATA
Bosphorus
ÜSKÜDAR
EMINÖNÜ
SEA OF MARMARA

Parsifal (Finds) VEGETARIAN The formerly derelict and now reclaimed Kurabiye Street is now home to an increasing number of tiny restaurants. This one, however, is a standout. The menu is entirely vegetarian—the type of vegetarian that keeps you coming back for more. Some of the creative dishes are broccoli *ograten* (sic), chard lasagna, black-eyed bean salad with walnut, and stuffed artichoke *dolma.* Zencefil (see below), across the street, may be healthy, but it's not veg like Parsifal.

Kurabiye Sok. 9A (the parallel street to Istiklal), Taksim. ✆ **0212/245-2588.** Lunch menu main courses 8.50TL; dinner menu 20% higher. MC, V. Daily noon–11pm.

Saray Muhallebiçileri (Value) PATISSERIE/KEBAPS People have been flocking to Saray Muhallebiçileri since its establishment in 1949, and a look in the window will tell you why. The colorful array of desserts lures you off the street and into this patisserie, although with such a huge choice and exceedingly low prices, it'll be difficult to rule out any one thing. Rice-pudding addicts should definitely not pass up this opportunity, although the chocolate pudding is irresistible as well. This is also a good place to try the *tavukgögsü,* a sweet, gummy pudding made with chicken that would be less difficult to avoid in another less-tempting establishment.

Istiklal Cad. 102–104, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/292-3434.** Appetizers and main courses 4TL–12TL. AE, MC, V. Daily 6am–1:30am.

Zencefil CAFE/VEGETARIAN Billed as a vegetarian cafe (in spite of the chicken with leeks on the menu), this spot serves up wholesome fare worthy of its healthy designation. Homemade bread with herb butter accompanies every meal, which might be a big healthy salad, an ample slice of quiche, or Indian stew with exotic spices and vegetables. Menus have been skillfully translated into English, which is useful, because pumpkin pie probably isn't in your basic Turkish dictionary, and it's too good to miss. Zencefil will be moving to a new location across the street at an undetermined date in the future; if it's not at the address below, turn around 180 degrees.

Kurabiye Sok. 3, Taksim. ✆ **0212/244-4082.** Main courses 6TL–12TL. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 9am–11pm.

CIHANGIR

Moderate

Demeti ★ (Value) TURKISH It's not only the views that draw us to this charming little eatery tucked down a residential block of Cihangir. The food is really good, too. There's no actual menu and very few selections. And oh, by the way, no one speaks English here (yet). You can be sure of really fresh, seasonal items like leek salad, and rare traditional specialties such as fish *köfte* and *pastırma* (garlic-spiced deli meat like pastrami, but not). The dining room is at the rear of the building where a glass wall opens up to watery views of the ports of Harem and Kadıköy on the Asian side. There's also a small outside terrace with three tiny tables for two.

Şimşirci Sok. 6/1 (Corner of Susam Sok.), Cihangir. ✆ **0212/244-0628.** Reservations suggested. Main courses 11TL–16TL (and up for fish). MC, V. Daily noon to midnight.

Doğa Balık ★★ MEZES/SEAFOOD People's eyes light up at the mention of this highly popular restaurant positioned on the rooftop (top floor in winter) of the Zurich Hotel in the newly arrived expat-heavy neighborhood of Cihangir. But the view is almost beside the point here. The very freshest fish of the season is served here: amply sized *palamut* (bonito) or *kalkan* (turbot) costing upwards of 30TL per kilo. However delectable the fish may be, the real attraction is the overwhelming selection of mezes. Some

30 varieties of wholesome forest greens are all guaranteed to delight: from nettles, to feverfew, to purslane, to "goat food." Don't miss the non-green mezes, in particular the *mercemek köfetsi* (lentil balls), and the monkfish salad. Indeed, load up on the appetizers and skip the main course.

Akarsu Yokusu Cad. 44–46, Cihangir (follow Siraselviler Cad. down from Taksim Sq. and turn left when you reach the mosque). ✆ **0212/243-3656.** www.dogabalik.com.tr. Appetizers and main courses 6TL–19TL; fish by weight. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight.

GÜMÜŞSUYU

Topaz ★★ MEDITERRANEAN/OTTOMAN This spot has been on the A-list for its fab views of the Bosphorus, the bridge, and the domes of the Bezmi Alem Valide Sultan Mosque, but it was only recently that the food lived up to the panoramas. This intersection of quality occurred with the opening of Topaz, a stylish and modern restaurant/bar pleasing palates with a mix of modern Mediterranean and Sultan-pleasing traditional Ottoman fare. In addition to the a la carte menu are two delectable multicourse prix-fixe menus, both a good value with or without the optional preselected wines accompanying each course (selected from the 207-label wine cellar). If you've grown bored of the Ottoman cuisine during your visit, Topaz is sure to reawaken the joy of eating traditional Turkish.

Inönü Cad. 50, Gümüşsuyu. ✆ **0212/249-1001.** www.topazistanbul.com. Reservations required. Main courses 34TL–75TL; *dégustation* menu 65TL (without wine)–90TL (with wine). AE, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 7pm–2am.

GALATASARAY, TEPEBAŞI & TÜNEL

Expensive

Çok Çok ★★★ THAI The menu at Çok Çok is a discovery of modern Thai cuisine innovated by a culinary master whose resume includes personal chef for the Thai royal family. Here, thanks to the fresh, organic ingredients, even humble pad Thai is elevated to the restaurant's specialty. Vegetarians will find the menu an easy ride, with choices that include tofu soup and mung bean noodle with bean sprouts. The bar features a tempting variety of inventive cocktails, plus a healthy wine cellar. Oh, and they make their own ice cream. There are a few street-side tables, but because Meşrutiyet Caddesi gets so much traffic at night, a meal out here will taste a bit too much like diesel.

Meşrutiyet Cad. 51, Tepebaşı. ✆ **0212/292-6496.** www.cokcok.com.tr. Reservations suggested (required on weekends). Main courses 18TL–36TL; prix-fixe lunch 24TL; dinner 54TL. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–11pm; Sun noon–10:30pm.

Gurme B oncuk ★★ Value ARMENIAN/TURKISH After 15 years of standing room only on Nevişade Sokak, Boncuk has followed the migration of Beyoğlu's dining epicenter over to the Asmalımescit neighborhood. Keeping with its *meyhane* roots, Boncuk serves delicacies such as fried brains (mmm . . .) and stuffed spleen, but thankfully there's a variety of more recognizable hot and cold mezes like *kızır,* flavorful and spicy bulgur balls, and *topik,* an Armenian specialty made of chickpea paste around a nucleus of onions and currants. Because availability is seasonal, try not to be too disappointed when the waiter informs you that your choice is not on the menu that day. Accordionist Mehmet Bey inspires locals to dance in the aisles on Friday and Saturday nights.

Asmalımescit Sok. 29, Tünel. ✆ **0212/245-3169.** www.gurmeboncuk.com. Reservations suggested. Appetizers and main courses 4TL–20TL; fish by weight. MC, V. Daily noon–midnight.

House Café BISTRO In 2002, a little cafe opened in a house in Nişantaşı. But the creative (and enormous) soups, sandwiches, and salads gained such a following that

House Café burst at the seams. There are now three locations (the other two are in Teşvikiye and Ortaköy) along with a solid and successful Istanbul brand. I barely made a dent in my lentil salad with purslane and goat cheese in truffle oil, although I may have had I not sunk my fork into my companion's huge and unexpectedly authentic Italian (not the Turkish kind) pizza. A handful of tiny tables line the cobbled alley, while indoors is a well-styled, cozy space.

Asmalımescit 9/1, Tünel. ✆ **0212/245-9515.** Atiye Sok., Iskeçe Apt. 10/1, Teşvikiye. ✆ **0212/259-2377.** Salhane Sok. 1, Ortaköy. ✆ **0212/227-2699.** www.thehousecafe.com.tr. Reservations recommended on weekends. Appetizers and main courses 17TL–30TL. AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 9am–11pm; Fri–Sat till 11:30pm; Sun till 10:30pm. Bar open Sun till midnight, Mon–Thurs 1am, Fri–Sat 2am.

Leb-i-Derya ★★ MEDITERRANEAN This candlelit rooftop is another one of Istanbul's exceptional panoramic locations and not surprisingly a popular magnet for the sophisticated night owls of Istanbul. The dinner menu offers some tantalizing options (slow-baked leerfish with tomatoes, capers, and olives; artichoke heart and Portobello salad with roasted red peppers and black-eyed peas). In addition to the fab views, the bar is famous for its extensive cocktail menu, including Caipirovska and Balalaika, two drinks I've never even heard of. In 2006 Leb-i-Derya began also serving on the sixth floor of the Richmond Hotel, but I prefer the Kumbaracı location.

Kumbaracı Yokusu, Kumbaracı Han 115/7, Tünel. ✆ **0212/243-9555.** www.lebiderya.com. Reservations recommended on weekends. Main courses 16TL–36TL. AE, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 11am–2am, Fri–Sat 11am–3am.

Refik ★ BLACK SEA/SEAFOOD This little restaurant has been an institution in the neighborhood since its inception in 1954, remaining in its own unassuming—unimpressive even—time warp, all while Sofyalı Sokak has become *the* destination of hip and bohemian nightlife. Its success lies equally with the unfailing quality of the ingredients and the pride that goes into the preparation. The earliest shifts arrive at 6am to start preparing for a menu distinct to the Black Sea region, and therefore heavy on dishes with black cabbage. The *hamsibuğulama* (fish steamed in season) and the *arnavut ciğeri* (sautéed Albanian liver and onions) are house specialties, as is the *kara lahana dolması* (stuffed cabbage). Mezes change seasonally, and in the summer, tables spill onto the narrow street.

Sofyalı Sok. 10–12, Tünel. ✆ **0212/243-2834.** Reservations required. Appetizers and main courses 7TL–17TL; fish by weight. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–10:30pm.

Moderate

9 Ece Aksoy ★ TURKISH When Turkish friends speak of home cooking the way grandma made it, the reference doesn't fall very far from this place. Ece Aksoy has been running her own restaurant since 1987, when she opened a humble bar in a local theater. She then moved to three ambitious (and successful) locations along the Bosphorus before downscaling to her current and compact home in Tepebaşı. Aksoy prepares a daily stream of homemade dishes based on what she thought looked good at the market, whipping up incredible Turkish flavors in the minuscule kitchen at the back of the restaurant. Seating is limited, so book ahead and try to score one of the two long and high pub tables that take up the restaurant's front room.

Oteller Sok. 9B, Tepebaşı, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/245-7628.** www.dokuzeceaksoy.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses 13TL–22TL. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2am; Sun 5pm–2am.

Flamm ITALIAN Things don't really get started here until dinnertime, but the menu works great for a light lunch of clever salads and sandwiches. The short string of tables

on Sofyalı Sokak offers some of the best people-watching in the area, while on cooler evenings, most diners opt for the relaxed, mezzanine-level dining room. Dinner options are more substantial: Choose from teasers like grilled rock grouper, *bresaola* with avocado, risottos, or the Flamm steak (the most expensive menu item) with rosemary, oyster mushrooms, and spinach in a cream sauce.

Sofyalı Sok. 16, Tünel. ✆ **0212/245-7604.** www.flamm-ist.com. Reservations recommended. Appetizers and main courses 7TL–42TL. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30am (later on Sat).

Midpoint ★ (Finds) INTERNATIONAL When the nearby offices empty out for the evening, Midpoint fills up with young, in-the-know hipsters hankering for a quality meal. While the Nişantaşı location (Abdi Ipekçi Cad., Kızılkaya Apt. 59, Şişli; ✆ **0212/219-9401**) crackles with after-hours energy, the newer spot on Istiklal Caddesi encourages a more relaxed, lounge-like experience. That's because Midpoint on Istiklal has a large and breezy outdoor garden terrace, expertly lit for effect. Meanwhile, the menu is overwhelming in its abundance, offering an amazing variety of pastas, wraps, and a whopping 17 salads. Try the grilled sea bass with artichokes or dive into the 250-gram (9-oz.) New York steak. Finally, the *janduje* (Gianduia chocolate semifreddo with raspberry sauce) is a slab of paradise on a plate. Tell the waiter to bring just one fork.

Istiklal Cad. 187, Tünel (at Odakule). ✆ **0212/245-7040.** www.midpoint.com.tr. Reservations recommended. Appetizers and main courses 8TL–26TL. AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri 9pm–midnight; Sat–Sun 9am–2pm.

Limonlu Bahçe (Finds) BISTRO If Adam and Eve were hoping to re-create the Garden of Eden, they'd feel right at home at the Lemon Garden (English for Limonlu Bahçe). A true city oasis, Limonlu Bahçe is secreted away in the rear of a residential apartment building down the hill below Galatasaray Lisesi. Once at the threshold of the building, it's 30 steps around a veritable warren of staircases to the outdoor canopied garden. You can get a traditional Turkish breakfast here from 9am to 3pm, or choose from among the salads, pastas, and lighter, teatime plates for lunch, dinner, or whenever. It's always cool back here under the shade of the canvas sails, while in winter, the entire space gets enfolded and transformed into a greenhouse.

Yeni Çarşı Cad. 98, Galatasaray. ✆ **0212/252-1094.** Reservations required for summer Sun brunch. Appetizers and main courses 6TL–20TL. AE, MC, V. Daily 9am–midnight.

Yakup 2 TURKISH The regular clientele keeps coming back to this Istanbul *meyhane* for the consistently good mezes, kebaps, and fair prices. In the best tradition of Turkish tavernas, the decor is nothing to speak of, and the best you can say about the expansive outdoor terrace is that it's outside. But the quality of the food is first-rate.

Asmalımescit Mah. 35–37, Tepebaşı. ✆ **0212/249-2925.** www.yakuprestaurant.com. Appetizers and main courses 6TL–19TL; fish by weight. MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 6:30pm–1am.

Inexpensive

Otantik (Kids) TURKISH For a special night out, Turks head to their favorite *et* or *balık* (meat or fish) restaurant, ready to splurge for dishes they themselves rarely cook at home. Finally, someone realized how delicious these "poor man" home-style recipes are, compiling a menu that includes *hıngal* (potato dumplings served with yogurt), *otantik yuvarlama çorba* (spicy lentil-based vegetable soup), and *keşkek* (a familiar-tasting dish of cream of wheat with pieces of chicken), along with various types of *gözleme* (filled pancake), *pilav,* and kebaps at extremely fair prices. The restaurant has four floors, each with its own traditional style, and the room in the fourth-floor annex sits right over the inner atrium of the Beaux Arts Çiçek Pasajı.

 Istiklal Cad. 170, Beyoğlu (next to the entrance to the Çiçek Pasajı). ✆ **0212/293-8451.** Appetizers and main courses 5TL–13TL. No credit cards. Daily 8am–midnight.

AROUND THE GALATA TOWER

Cenova (Moments) TURKISH Sure, you can expect a decent meal here, but Cenova is really all about the medieval ambience. Because Cenova is housed in the Marine Commerce Room of the 14th-century Genoese Podestà, part of a building complex that was then known as the Palazzo Comunale (think municipal building), it's a popular place for private parties (which is why you should call ahead to reserve). Each day the menu specializes in one thing: Tuesday is tandoori night while Friday the kitchen puts its energy into the vegetables. But the a la carte menu is tempting, with oddball dishes like *balık kavurma* (fish casserole), fish baked in milk, baked hot helva, sweet figs, and hot ice cream. On weekends, there's live *fasıl* music.

Bereketzade Mah. Kartçınar Sok. 16, Galata. ✆ **0212/244-1111.** www.cenovarestaurant.com. Reservations suggested. Appetizers and main courses 8TL–15TL. MC, V. Daily 5–11pm.

Galata House ★ (Finds) GEORGIAN Hidden along the steep slopes of Galata's historic streets, this little restaurant, the brainchild of an architect/city planner and his wife, occupies a row house that served as the British jail in the early 1900s. The coziness of the dining rooms—three small salons and an outdoor upper balcony—belie the building's earlier purpose, except for the few preserved squares of plaster etched by prisoners during periods of extreme boredom. At first, the menu selections appear Turkish, but they arrive with an unexpected twist of flavor: The menu reaches into Caucasian territory, with Georgian dumplings, blini, borscht, and chicken and pea salad with yogurt and dill. Potential visitors should take note, however, of the steep incline of the streets in this neighborhood (wear rubber soles!), and that this particular street is often unlit.

Galata Kulesi Sok. 15 (61), Galata (follow Kuledibi Sok. from the Galata Tower). ✆ **0212/245-1861.** www.thegalatahouse.com. Reservations recommended. Appetizers and main courses 10TL–19TL. MC, V. Tues–Sun noon–midnight.

Kivahan ★ REGIONAL TURKISH If you're looking for something easy, authentic, informal, and interesting to eat in Galata, Kivahan is a no-brainer, although it's no replacement for Çiya (p. 120). There are traditional dishes from the various regions of Anatolia not usually seen on menus: grape leaves stuffed with fava or cheese (instead of pilav) or bulgur balls flavored with mint, pomegranate, and cumin from Adana. With these atypical items on offer, the only way to choose is the point-and-shoot style of ordering so prevalent at Turkish *lokantas.* They'll even mix up a plate for the indecisive palate, the problem being that you'll want more of each.

Galata Kulesi Meydanı 4, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/292-0037.** www.galatakivahan.com. Main courses 8TL–18TL. MC, V. Daily 11:30am–midnight.

NORTH OF BEYOĞLU

Expensive

Beymen Br asserie ITALIAN Simple, even nondescript, a seat at the brasserie's sidewalk cafe has been the hot ticket in the neighborhood since it opened in 2003. The Mediterranean menu leans to Italian, with top-notch pastas executed in a way even an Italian would approve of (and they do; a couple of expats were next to me last time I ate here). The salad Niçoise or carpaccio of *bonfile* and mozzarella served with olive pesto are examples of some of the lighter choices, while the menu even offers half portions (thankfully, given the high prices).

Abdi Ipekçi Cad. 23/1, Nişantaşı. ✆ **0212/343-0443.** Reservations recommended. Appetizers and main courses 16TL–40TL. AE, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 9am–11pm; Fri–Sat 9am–1:30am.

Moderate

Borsa ★★ KEBAPS/TURKISH Reservations are vital at this culinary favorite of the elite and influential. Opened in 1927, it's named for the stock exchange that operated near the original when both were located by the Golden Horn. Now it shares space with the convention center and sits protected behind military guard. Borsa features the best of Anatolian cuisine, from the peasant *plakı* (slow-cooked beans) to the more celebratory lamb *şiş* prepared over an open fire. Main courses are overwhelmingly succulent samples of lamb or veal.

Lütfi Kırdar Convention Center, Harbiye. ✆ **0212/232-4201.** www.borsarestaurant.com. Reservations required. Appetizers and main courses 8TL–25TL. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6pm–midnight.

Carne Finds Value KOSHER/MEDITERRANEAN Leaning heavily on classic ingredients of the Mediterranean, Carne manages to please palates both kosher and non. Some of the mouthwatering dishes exiting from the kitchen include Sephardic specialties like spinach balls, leek meatballs, or chicken rolled with spinach, dried grapes, and peanuts. The menu also has plenty of traditional Turkish as well as vegetarian options, and at lunchtime, a number of good-value prix-fixe combos are offered, while a la carte selections are 20% off.

Halaskargazı Cad., Uzay Apt. 53, Şişli. ✆ **0212/241-8585.** www.carne.com.tr. Reservations required for dinner. Appetizers and main courses 10TL–34TL. MC, V. Mon–Thurs and Sun noon–11pm; Fri noon–4pm; Sat 7:30–11pm.

Hünkar ★★ Value OTTOMAN This Istanbul institution was founded in the neighborhood of Fatih in 1950. The Fatih location has since closed, but the restaurant's loyal following ensured its survival in Nişantaşı, with a second branch in Etiler. Istanbullus wax lyrical over the traditional Turkish and Ottoman cooking served here. Hünkar is famous for its *beğendili kebap* and roast lamb. Their warm *irmik helvası* (semolina dessert) is the model for all others. The Nişantaşı location fills up with local professionals at lunchtime; the homey Etiler location has an outdoor trellised sidewalk cafe.

Mim Kemal Öke Cad. 21/1, Nişantaşı. ✆ **0212/225-4665.** www.hunkar1950.com. Reservations suggested. Appetizers and main courses 8TL–22TL. AE, MC, V. Daily 11am–11:30pm.

Köşebaşı Ocakbaşı ★★★ Value KEBAPS/REGIONAL TURKISH Yet another restaurant with the best kebaps in town? Yeah, sure. But Köşebaşı was unexpectedly as advertised, boosting my very low blood sugar with the usual offering of appetizers and kebaps, but with that added something special. Seriously, who'd have thought that a simple plate of arugula, watercress, green mint, and onions in a sour pomegranate sauce could be so transcendent? Lamb (by way of the *Terbiyeli Şiş*) is treated to perfection here: marinated and tenderized in olive oil and milk for a minimum of 6 hours. In summer, Köşebaşı sets out a full-service restaurant at Reina (the nightclub on the Bosphorus); but don't bother, because it's not as good as the Nişantaşı branch.

Bronz Sok. 5, Nişantaşı. ✆ **0212/241-3434.** www.kosebasi.com.tr. Reservations recommended. Main courses 9TL–22TL; prix-fixe 50TL for 2. MC, V. Daily noon–11pm.

Kantin ★ Finds BISTRO/CAFE The vast selection of posh eateries in Nişantaşı is overwhelming. But what to do when all one wants is a simple, unassuming, wholesome, and flavorful (late?) lunch event? Kantin provides that experience, combining a cafe, specialty takeout, and bistro all in one. Head up to the second floor past the scent of

lilies directly to the rear of the building. There, the room is divided by a fourth wall of glass, leaving you to choose an indoor table or, weather permitting, a spot under the Linden trees on the outdoor terrace. The menu changes daily and features the freshest flavors of the season. Some of the more regular items are a grilled vegetable salad, a "crispy" salmon, and to finish, a *dondurmalı irmik* (sweet semolina topped with ice cream).

Akkavak Sok. 30, Nişantaşı. ✆ **0212/219-3114.** www.kantin.biz. Main courses 10TL–20TL. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–7pm.

GOLDEN HORN/HASKÖY

Café du Levant ★ FRENCH This authentic Parisian bistro is unexpected on the main Hasköy road as part of the Rahmi M. Koç Museum complex. Appropriately, there is no hint of Turkey on the quintessentially French menu, which features the requisite duck *à l'orange,* potatoes *dauphinoise,* and chocolate mousse. Otherwise, choose from lighter selections such as fish *en carte* or a number of vegetarian items. The ambience is authentic, romantic, and perfect for a weekend luncheon.

Rahmi M. Koç Museum (p. 190), Kumbarhane Cad. 2 (continuation of Hasköy Cad.), Sütlüce. ✆ **0212/369-6607.** www.cafedulevant.com. Reservations recommended. Appetizers and main courses 12TL–42TL. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun noon–2:30pm and 7pm–midnight.

BEŞIKTAŞ & THE BOSPHORUS VILLAGES

Very Expensive

Feriye Restaurant ★★ OTTOMAN Lesser princes and dignitaries were relegated to this stunning auxiliary palace, which has been renovated and converted into a luxurious restaurant and cultural center. Summertime is definitely the season for this spot, as the tables move out to the seaside terrace, creating a spectacular dining experience little more than an arm's length from scores of jellyfish. The seafood dishes are worth mentioning, if not only for the festivity of the occasion, than for the medallions of swordfish topped with a seafood ragout. Carnivores will not be disappointed by a menu reflecting the tastes of an empire that spanned the Middle East all the way to the Asiatic Sea; try the breast of chicken stuffed with pistachios and see what I mean. Twinkling Bosphorus views and nighttime sea breezes are romance at its best, although this restaurant is equally popular during its Sunday brunch service.

Feriye Sarayı, Çırağan Cad. 40, Ortaköy (above the Çırağan Palace on the right). ✆ **0212/227-2216.** www.feriye.com. Reservations required. Appetizers and main courses 18TL–65TL. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 7pm–midnight.

Poseidon ★★★ SEAFOOD Almost as soon as this Bebek Bosphorus-front restaurant got a face-lift back in 2003, the actors, politicians, expats, and sporting celebrities started to roll in. It's got quite a loyal following now, particularly among jet-setting local residents. The bay at Bebek is particularly scenic with the twin fez-like towers of the Egyptian consulate rising above Bebek marina. When you take your eyes off the view and take note of the menu, you'll see seasonal specialties from the sea such as baked octopus and king prawns. The fish appetizers are dreamy, and I'm a sucker for a plate of seaweed (seriously). Try to resist the bread basket, or you'll fill up on corn bread and focaccia before your first course arrives.

Çevdetpaşa Cad. 58, Bebek. ✆ **0212/287-9531.** www.poseidonbebek.com. Reservations required. Appetizers 7TL–23TL; fish by weight (30TL–120TL per kilo). Cover 10TL. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight.

Expensive

Banyan Seaside ★★ ASIAN/FUSION This top-floor hot spot takes full advantage of its position overlooking Ortaköy and the Bosphorus, with an amazing outdoor terrace that in the crisper months is heated by an open fire pit and heat lamps. The hip menu fuses Mediterranean staples with Asian accents. There's seafood with ginger sauce, octopus carpaccio with wasabi aioli, and sake-marinated chargrilled filet mignon in a ginger teriyaki sauce. The noodle bar caters to lighter appetites, and you can choose from 20 different types of tea. Banyan has a second location in Nişantaşı at Abdi Ipekci Cad. 40/3 (✆ **0212/219-6011**).

Muallim Naci Cad., Salhane Sok. 3 (near the ferry landing), Ortaköy. ✆ **0212/259-9060.** www.banyanrestaurant.com. Reservations required. Appetizers and main courses 12TL–38TL. AE, MC, V. Daily 5pm–midnight.

Da Mario ★★ ITALIAN This is widely acclaimed as the most authentic Italian restaurant in Istanbul and is another spectacularly successful enterprise by Istanbul Doors. They make a mean *spaghetti alle vongole,* and the wood fire ensures their pizza and breads are finger-licking good. It's located on the ground floor of a multistory building; the three upper floors are dedicated to Anjelique (p. 235).

Dilhayat Sok. 7, Etiler. ✆ **0212/265-1596.** www.damariorestaurant.com. Reservations suggested. Appetizers and main courses 11TL–36TL. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–2am.

Tuğra ★★★ OTTOMAN This place has created a legend for itself with its innovative synthesis of foods from the entire Ottoman Empire against an imperial backdrop of regal colors and traditional floral motifs. Dishes include a delicious mackerel and red mullet *dolma* and a marinated lamb loin grilled with yogurt, tomato, and spicy butter sauce. It's possible to drop upwards of 200TL per person on dinner and a few gin and tonics, but if you don't drink and you order a la carte, you can at least expect an exceptional dining experience without the heart failure.

In the Çırağan Palace Hotel Kempinski Istanbul (p. 90), Çırağan Cad. 84, Beşiktaş. ✆ **0212/258-3377.** www.kempinski-istanbul.com. Reservations required. Dress smart. Appetizers and main courses 18TL–55TL. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 7–11pm.

Vogue ★★ INTERNATIONAL/SUSHI Who would expect a restaurant in an office building would create the buzz that has surrounded Vogue for years? The success of this restaurant owes to a high-quality menu that relies heavily on Mediterranean and international cuisine, plus an amazing and ample sushi bar that predates Istanbullus growing craze for Japanese food. Floor-to-ceiling windows provide panoramic views as far as Maiden's Tower (and including the Historic Peninsula), while in summer, an outdoor terrace gets graceful sea breezes.

Spor Cad., BJK Plaza, A Block, 13th Floor, Akaretler, Beşiktaş. ✆ **0212/227-4404.** www.istanbuldoors.com. Reservations required. Appetizers and main courses 16TL–44TL. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–2am.

Moderate

Malta Köşkü SEAFOOD/TURKISH Up through the wooded paths (there's also an asphalt road) overlooking the treetops of Yıldız is this palatial rococo mansion, an addition to the grounds during the reign of Abdülhamid II. The infamously paranoid sultan had his brother Murad V, together with their mother, imprisoned in this gilded cage. The mansion is now another one of the city's evocative dining destinations and a popular choice for breezy weekend lunches and evening interludes. The lighter cafe menu features sandwiches like steak or salmon and cheese, as well as crumpets and clotted cream for a

decadent afternoon tea. For dinner, the menu becomes much more interesting. Drinks can seem a bit overpriced, but the view from under the wooden trellis overlooking the treetops toward Maiden's Tower and the boats crisscrossing the Bosphorus is included in the price.

Yıldız Park, Beşiktaş. ✆ **0212/248-9453.** Reservations recommended on weekends. Appetizers and main courses 9TL–36TL. MC, V. Daily 9am–10:30pm.

5 THE ASIAN SIDE

VERY EXPENSIVE

A'jia ★ MEDITERRANEAN Part of the Istanbul Doors family of highly successful restaurants (Vogue, Angelique, Da Mario, Wan-na), A'jia is certainly blessed. The menu changes seasonally, except (by popular demand) the octopus carpaccio, sea bass filet with vegetables in olive oil, and a hazelnut soufflé. On a recent visit, the menu featured a cinnamon-flavored lamb and an intriguing baklava-rolled seafood with asparagus in a tartar sauce.

In the A'jia hotel (p. 92), Ahmet Rasim Paşa Yalısı, Çubuklu Cad. 27, Kanlıca. ✆ **0216/413-9300.** www.ajiahotel.com. Reservations required. Appetizers and main courses 12TL–48TL. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight.

Del Mare SEAFOOD There isn't much about this waterfront restaurant that isn't spectacular. The old stone building was part of a string of factories that lined the shorefront at the turn of the 20th century; inside is a dining room that spills out onto a canopied terrace overlooking the Bosphorus. Local fishing boats cruise beneath the twinkling lights of the Bosphorus Bridge—probably some of the same local fishermen that hauled in today's catch. Del Mare is known for its salt fish and grilled calamari, though the *ahtapot patlican* (eggplant purée and octopus) was an unexpected hit. The chef will prepare the fish or meat of your choice whatever way you want it.

Kuleli Cad. 53/4, Çengelköy. ✆ **0216/422-5762.** www.del-mare.com. Reservations suggested. The restaurant shuttle will pick you up from Kuruçeşme. Fish by weight (expect around 50€–70€ per person). AE, MC, V. Daily noon–11pm.

INEXPENSIVE

Çiya Sofrası ★★★ Value REGIONAL TURKISH This modest eatery, headed by Musa Dagdeviren, formerly of the California branch of the Culinary Institute of America, has become an international phenomenon. It's located up a busy market street not far from the Kadıköy ferry stop (on the Asian side; take the ferry to Kadıköy from Eminönü) and serves delectable and rarely seen regional Anatolian creations worthy of a brief excursion from the European side. The chef was listed in Saveur's favorite 100 in the 2006 edition, while the restaurant has been featured in the *New York Times* and Zagat Survey's Europe's Best Restaurants. Çiya has three storefronts including an annex serving only kebaps. At the *lokanta,* you'll point at and write down your selections, and then hand your cheat sheet to your waiter once seated.

Güneşli Bahçesi Sok. 43–44, Kadıköy (from the Kadıköy/Eminönü dock, cross the busy street and head up toward the balık pazarı/fish market). ✆ **0216/330-3190.** Reservations recommended. Appetizers and main courses 4TL–18TL. DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–10pm.

7

Exploring Istanbul

Istanbul is a city that has successfully incorporated a rich past into a promising future—no small feat considering the sheer magnitude of history buried under those cobblestone streets. Three of the greatest empires in Western history each claimed Istanbul as their capital; as a result, the city overflows with extraordinary sites all vying for equal time. Conveniently, all of the top sights are located on or immediately around Sultanahmet Park, but that by no means is an indication that there's nothing worth seeing outside of that neighborhood. A dizzying number of restoration projects are underway in the Old City (of which Sultanahmet is a part) and Taksim, Beyoğlu, Çukurcuma, Galata, and Tünel. In these Beyoğlu neighrborhoods, you can stroll past freshly restored turn-of-the-19th-century ambassadorial palaces and barracks, converted 16th-century waterhouses, and crisp, minimalist museums, all while shopping for an expensive pair of Levi's.

The number of restorations and modernization projects scheduled to be unveiled in time for 2010, when Istanbul ascends to the throne of **European Culture Capital,** is simply dizzying. At the head of the list is the Ayasofya: After several years of cleaning, preserving, restoring, and uncovering, the upper galleries are again open to the public. Even more exciting is the removal of the interior scaffolding, which had been obscuring the unobstructed splendor of the dome since 1993.

1 SIGHTS & ATTRACTIONS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

FATIH

Ahirkapi

Marmara Sea Walls (p. 165)

Aksaray

Hırka-i Şerif Camii (Mosque of the Holy Mantle; p. 174)
Valens Aqueduct (Bozdoğan Kemeri; p. 152)

Ayakapi

Aya Nikola Kilisesi (p. 177)
Gül Camii (p. 177)

Ayvansaray

Tekfur Sarayı (Byzantine Palace; p. 177)

Balat

Ahrida Sinagogue (p. 175)
Ayadimitri Kilisesi (St. Demetrios Kanavis Kilisesi; p. 175)
St. Stephen of the Bulgars (Bulgar Kilisesi; p. 177)

Beyazıt

Arch of Theodosius (p. 171)
Beyazıt Mosque (Beyazıt Camii; p. 154)
Bodrum Camii or the Myrelaion (p. 172)
Grand Bazaar (Kapalı Çarşısı; p. 132)
Kalenderhane Camii (p. 172)
Museum of Calligraphy (Türk Vakıf Sanatları Müzesi; p. 173)
Nuruosmaniye Külliyesi (p. 173)

Cağaloğlu
Cağaloğlu Hamamı (p. 153)

Çemberlitaş
Atik Ali Paşa Camii (p. 172)
Çemberlitaş Hamamı (p. 153)
Column of Constantine (p. 170)

Edirnekapi
St. Savior in Chora (Kariye Müzesi; formerly the Kariye Camii; p. 150)
The Theodosian Walls (p. 165)

Eminönü
Hünkar Kasrı (Imperial Pavilion; p. 157)
Mısır Çarşısı/Egyptian Spice Market (p. 210)
The New Queen Mother's Mosque (Yeni Valide Camii/Yeni Camii; p. 158)

Fatih
Fatih Mosque and Complex (Fatih Camii ve Külliyesi; p. 157)

Fener
Atik Mustafapasa Camii (p. 175)
Ayazma and the Church of St. Mary of Blachernae (p. 175)
Church of Theotokos Pammakaristos (Joyous Mother of God Church, now the Fethiye Camii; p. 146)
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (p. 146)
Metochion of Mount Sinai (p. 176)
St. Mary of the Mongols/Kanlı Kilise (p. 176)

Gülhane
Istanbul Archaeology Museum (Arkeoloji Müzesi; p. 136)

Kumkapi
Marmara Sea Walls (p. 165)

Sultanahmet
Ayasofya (p. 124)
Binbirdirek Sarnıçı (p. 169)
Blue Mosque (Sultan Ahmet Camii; p. 130)
Bucoleon Palace (p. 169)
Caferağa Medresesi (p. 169)
Haseki Sultan Hamamı (p. 153)
Hippodrome (p. 134)
Istanbul Library (p. 189)
Kabasakal Medresi (p. 170)
Küçük Ayasofya Camii (Church of the Saints Sergius and Bacchus; p. 150)
Mosaic Museum (p. 150)
Museum of the History of Islamic Science and Technology (Islam Bilim ve Teknoloji Tarıhı Müzesi; p. 170)
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts (p. 137)
Soğukçeşme Sokağı (p. 171)
Sokullu Mehmet Paşa Camii (p. 159)
Sphendome (p. 151)
Sultanahmet Prison (p. 171)
Topkapı Palace (Topkapı Sarayı; p. 138)
Vakıflar Halı Müzesi (Foundation Carpet Museum; p. 171)
Yerebatan Cistern (Yerebatan Sarnıcı; p. 152)

Tahtakale
Rüstem Paşa Külliyesi (p. 174)
Tahtakale Hamamı/Istanbul Kahvehanesi (p. 153)

Vefa
Church of St. Theodore (p. 172)
Şehzade Külliyesi (Crown Prince Mosque Complex; p. 159)
Süleymaniye Hamamı (p. 153)
Süleymaniye Mosque and Complex (Süleymaniye Camii ve Külliyesi; p. 159)

Yedikule
Yedikule (Seven Towers Fortress; p. 166)

Zeyrek
Church of the Pantocrator (Zeyrek Camii; p. 174)

EYÜP

Eyüp Sultan Mosque (p. 156)
Pierre Loti (p. 157)
SantralIstanbul (p. 167)

BEYOĞLU & NORTH OF BEYOĞLU

Galata

Church of SS. Peter and Paul (p. 181)
Galata Tower and the Galata Neighborhood (p. 147)

Galatasaray

Balıkpazarı (Galatasaray Fish Market; p. 178)
Çiçek Pasajı (Flower Passage; p. 178)
Galatasaray High School (Galatasaray Lisesi; p. 179)
Galerist (p. 168)
Gallery Apel (p. 168)
Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center (p. 167)
Tarıhı Galatasaray Hamamı (p. 153)

Harbiye

Military Museum (p. 180)

Kabataş

Dolmabahçe Palace (Dolmabahçe Sarayı; p. 162)
Inönü Stadium (p. 190)

Karaköy

Antrepo No. 3 (p. 167)
Arap Camii (Arab Mosque; p. 180)
Istanbul Museum of Modern Art (p. 168)
Jewish Museum of Turkey (p. 148)
Yeraltı Camii (Underground Mosque; p. 181)

Levent

Elgiz Çağdaş Art Gallery/Proje4L (p. 168)

Sütlüce

Miniaturk (p. 190)
Rahmi M. Koç Museum (p. 190)

Taksim

Atatürk Kültür Merkezi (Atatürk Cultural Center; p. 181)
Aya Triada Ermeni Katolik Kilisesi (p. 182)
Cumhuriyet Anıtı/Republican Monument (p. 182)
St. Antoine Italyan Katolik Kilisesi (Italian Catholic Church; p. 182)
Taksim Maksemi (Water Distribution; p. 182)

Tepebaşi

Pera Museum (p. 180)

Tünel

Galata Mevlevihanesi (p. 178)
Tünel Pasajı (p. 180)

BEŞIKTAŞ & THE BOSPHORUS VILLAGES

Arnavutköy

American Research Institute in Turkey (p. 189)

Beşiktaş

The British Council (p. 188)
Galeri Nev (p. 168)
Naval Museum (Deniz Müzesi; p. 182)

Çırağan

Çırağan Palace (p. 161)
Yıldız Palace and Park (Yıldız Sarayı ve Parkı; p. 163)

Emirgan

Sabancı Museum (p. 184)

Sariyer

Rumeli Fortress (Rumeli Hisarı; p. 184)
Sadberk Hanım (p. 184)

THE ASIAN SIDE

Beylerbeyi

Beylerbeyi Palace (Beylerbeyi Sarayı; p. 161)

Üsküdar
- Çinili Camii (p. 186)
- Leander's Tower (Maiden's Tower/Kız Kulesi; p. 186)
- Mihrimah Camii (Iskele Camii/ Mihrimah Sultan Camii; p. 187)

Kadıköy
- Fenerbahçe Stadium (p. 190)

Kanlıca
- Tarıhı Kanlıca Yoğurdu (p. 187)

2 THE TOP SIGHTS

Ayasofya ★★★ For almost a thousand years, the Ayasofya was a triumph of Christianity and the symbol of Byzantium, and until the 16th century maintained its status as the largest Christian church in the world. The cathedral is so utterly awesome that the Statue of Liberty's torch would barely graze the top. Erected over the ashes of two previous churches using dismantled and toppled columns and marble from some of the greatest temples around the empire, the Ayasofya (known in Greek as the Hagia Sophia and in English as St. Sophia, or Church of the Holy Wisdom) was designed to surpass in grandeur, glory, and majesty every other edifice ever constructed as a monument to God. Justinian began construction soon after his suppression of the Nika Revolt (during which the second church was burned to the ground), indicating that combating unemployment was high on the list as well. He chose the two preeminent architects of the day: Anthemius of Tralles (Aydın) and Isidorus of Miletus. After 5 years and 4 months, when the construction of the Ayasofya was completed in A.D. 537, the emperor raised his hands to heaven and proclaimed, "Glory to God who has deigned to let me finish so great a work. O Solomon, I have outdone thee!" Enthusiasm for this feat of architecture and engineering was short-lived, because 2 years later, an earthquake caused the dome to collapse. The new dome was slightly smaller in diameter but higher than the original, supported by a series of massive towers to counter the effects of future earthquakes. Glass fittings in the walls were employed to monitor the weight distribution of the dome; the sound of crunching glass was an early warning system indicating that the weight of the dome had shifted. Several more earthquakes caused additional damage to the church, requiring repairs to the dome (among other sections), which was increased in height thanks to the support provided by the addition of flying buttresses (additional buttresses were added at two later dates).

In 1204, led by the Doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo, the Crusaders successfully breached the defensive walls of Constantinople, occupied the city, and distributed the Ayasofya's substantial treasures throughout the Holy Roman Empire, a desecration that robbed the church of precious relics and definitively divided the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches.

After Mehmet II penetrated the city in 1453, his first official stop was to this overwhelming symbol of an empire that he had conquered, and with his head to the ground, he invoked the name of Allah and declared the great house of worship a mosque.

Tips Hours & Admission Costs for Mosques & Churches

Unless otherwise noted, **opening hours** for mosques and churches are daily, from dawn to dusk; unless otherwise noted, **admission** is free.

Fun Facts I Wish I May, I Wish I Might

According to legend, when construction of the Ayasofya reached the height of a man, the construction team set out to get a bite to eat, leaving their tools under the watch of a small boy. An angel appeared and urged the boy to fetch the men so that they could return to the work of building God's house. When the boy told the angel that he promised not to leave the tools unattended, the angel promised to keep an eye on everything until his return. After leaving the site and thus breaking his promise, the boy was never allowed to return, and the angel continues to wait for him. Go to the entrance of the basilica proper, to the left of the Imperial Door; legend has it that the angel grants a wish to all those who complete a 360-degree circle with their thumb in the hole of this wish-worn column.

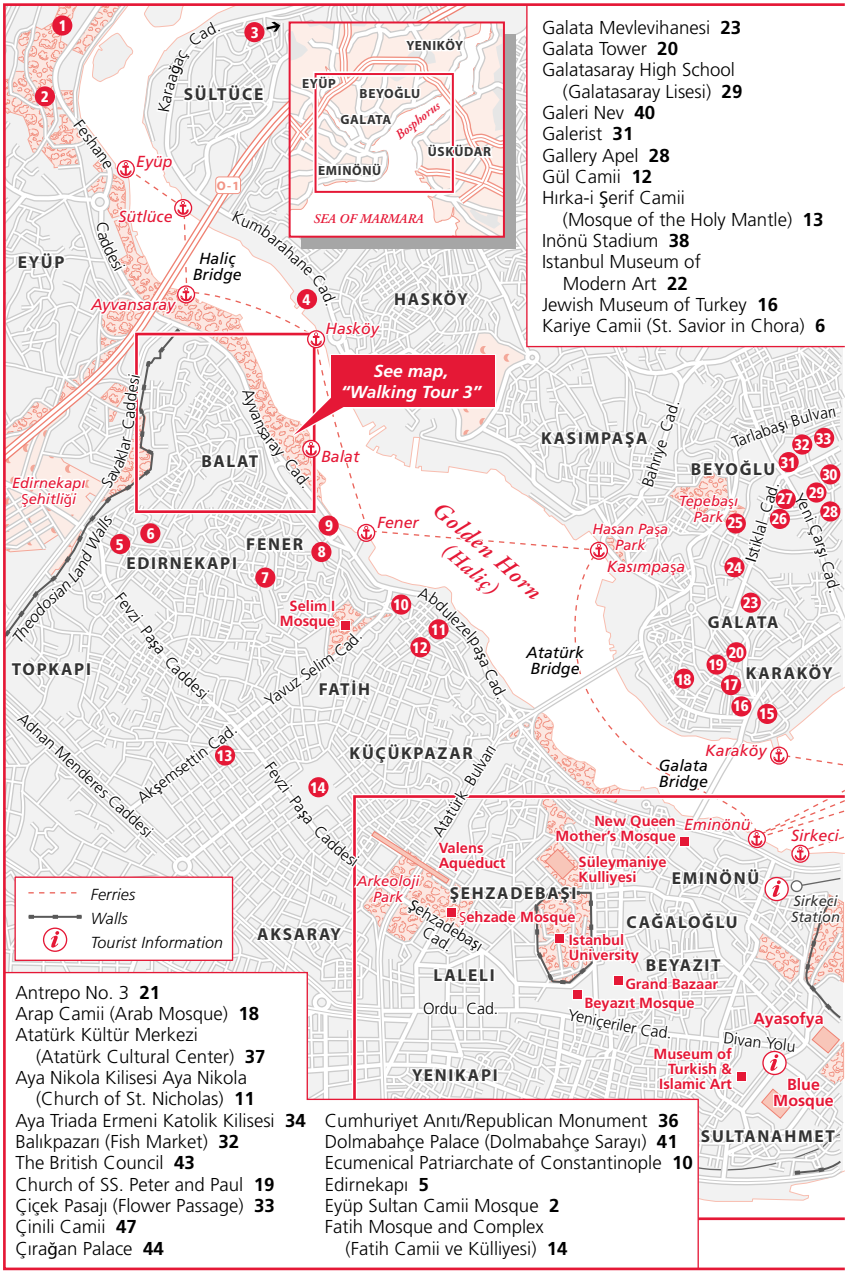
In the years that followed, several adjustments were made to the building, including the covering over of the frescoes and mosaics, due to the prohibition of Islam against the representation of figures. (The Iconoclastic movement of the 8th and 9th centuries A.D. had similarly disavowed the use of figural depictions and icons, during which time many of the frescoes and mosaics were defaced, destroyed, or cemented over; any figural representations seen today date to after this period.) A single wooden minaret was erected (and later replaced by Mimar Sinan during restorations in the 16th c.), and three additional minarets were added at a later date. The altar was shifted slightly to the right to accommodate a mihrab indicating the direction of Mecca, and an ablution fountain, along with a kitchen, was erected in the courtyard.

Ayasofya was converted from a mosque into a museum by Atatürk in 1935, after a painstaking restoration led by Thomas Whitmore of the Byzantium Institute of America. Mosaics and icons that were previously defaced or whitewashed were rediscovered and restored.

While this enduring symbol of Byzantium still has the power to instill awe after so many additions and reconstructions (including tombs, schools, and soup kitchens during its tour of duty as a mosque), the exterior's original architecture is marred by large and boxy buttresses; you'll get more of a representation of the intent of Justinian's original from the inside. On your way in, notice the stone cannonballs lining the gravel path of the outer courtyard. These are the actual cannonballs used by Mehmet the Conqueror in his victorious 1453 battle for the city. Also outside the main entrance are the foundations of the original church built by Theodosius.

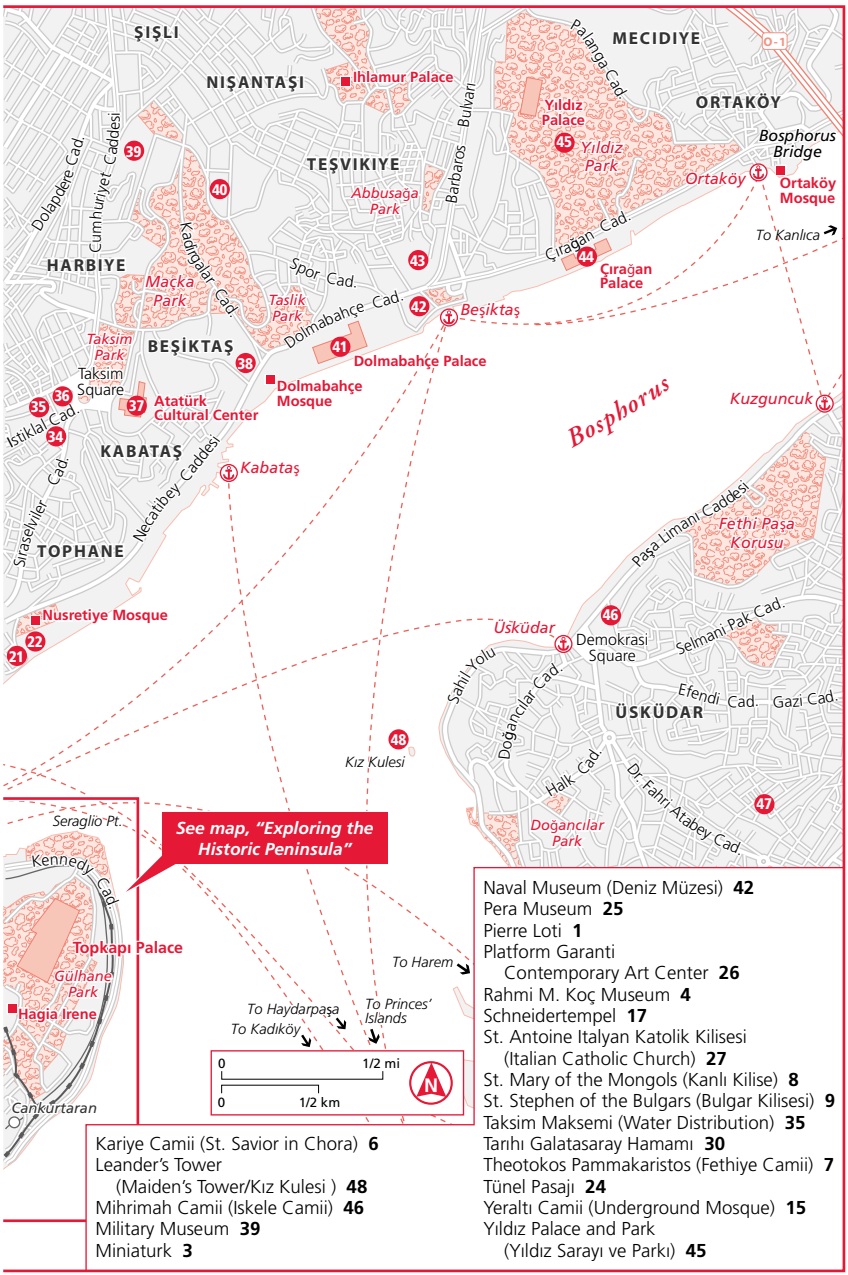
The main entrance to Ayasofya leads to the **exonarthex** ★, a vaulted outer vestibule that was reserved for those not yet baptized. The **inner narthex** ★★, or vestibule, glistens with Justinian's original gold mosaics embellished with floral and geometric patterns. The most central of the nine doors leading into the nave of the church, called the **Imperial Gate** ★, is topped by a **mosaic** ★★★ of the Christ Pantocrator holding a book with the inscription "Peace be with you. I am the Light of the World." He is surrounded by roundels portraying the Virgin Mary, the angel Gabriel, and a bearded emperor, believed to represent Leo VI asking for forgiveness for his four marriages.

Through the Imperial Gate is a sight that brought both emperors and sultans to their knees: a soaring **dome** ★★★ that rises 56m (184 ft.) in height (about 15 stories) and spans a width of approximately 31m (102 ft.). Light filters through a crown formed by



Galata Mevlevihanesi **23**
Galata Tower **20**
Galatasaray High School (Galatasaray Lisesi) **29**
Galeri Nev **40**
Galerist **31**
Gallery Apel **28**
Gül Camii **12**
Hırka-i Şerif Camii (Mosque of the Holy Mantle) **13**
Inönü Stadium **38**
Istanbul Museum of Modern Art **22**
Jewish Museum of Turkey **16**
Kariye Camii (St. Savior in Chora) **6**

Antrepo No. 3 **21**
Arap Camii (Arab Mosque) **18**
Atatürk Kültür Merkezi (Atatürk Cultural Center) **37**
Aya Nikola Kilisesi Aya Nikola (Church of St. Nicholas) **11**
Aya Triada Ermeni Katolik Kilisesi **34**
Balıkpazarı (Fish Market) **32**
The British Council **43**
Church of SS. Peter and Paul **19**
Çiçek Pasajı (Flower Passage) **33**
Çinili Camii **47**
Çırağan Palace **44**
Cumhuriyet Anıtı/Republican Monument **36**
Dolmabahçe Palace (Dolmabahçe Sarayı) **41**
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople **10**
Edirnekapı **5**
Eyüp Sultan Camii Mosque **2**
Fatih Mosque and Complex (Fatih Camii ve Külliyesi) **14**



Kariye Camii (St. Savior in Chora) **6**
Leander's Tower
(Maiden's Tower/Kız Kulesi) **48**
Mihrimah Camii (Iskele Camii) **46**
Military Museum **39**
Miniaturk **3**

Naval Museum (Deniz Müzesi) **42**
Pera Museum **25**
Pierre Loti **1**
Platform Garanti
Contemporary Art Center **26**
Rahmi M. Koç Museum **4**
Schneidertempel **17**
St. Antoine Italyan Katolik Kilisesi
(Italian Catholic Church) **27**
St. Mary of the Mongols (Kanlı Kilise) **8**
St. Stephen of the Bulgars (Bulgar Kilisesi) **9**
Taksim Maksemi (Water Distribution) **35**
Tarıhı Galatasaray Hamamı **30**
Theotokos Pammakaristos (Fethiye Camii) **7**
Tünel Pasajı **24**
Yeraltı Camii (Underground Mosque) **15**
Yıldız Palace and Park
(Yıldız Sarayı ve Parkı) **45**

40 windows and ribs, glittering with the gold mosaic tiles that cover the entire interior of the dome. At its decorative peak (including the side aisles, semidomes, inner walls, and upper galleries), Ayasofya's interior mosaics covered more than 1⅓ hectares (4 acres) of space. Eight **calligraphic discs,** four of which are the largest examples of calligraphy in the Islamic world, ornament the interior and bear the names of Allah and Mohammed (above the apse); the four successive caliphs, Ali, Abu Bakr, Osman, and Omar (at each of the four corners of the dome); and Ali's sons Hassan and Huseyin (in the nave). The main nave, side aisles, apse, and semidomes are covered with mosaics and frescoes, depicting religious and imperial motifs or floral and geometric designs. At the center of the space is a square of marble flooring called **Coronation Square,** believed to have been the location of the emperor's throne, the place of coronation and therefore, in the minds of the Byzantines (or at least the emperor), the center of the universe.

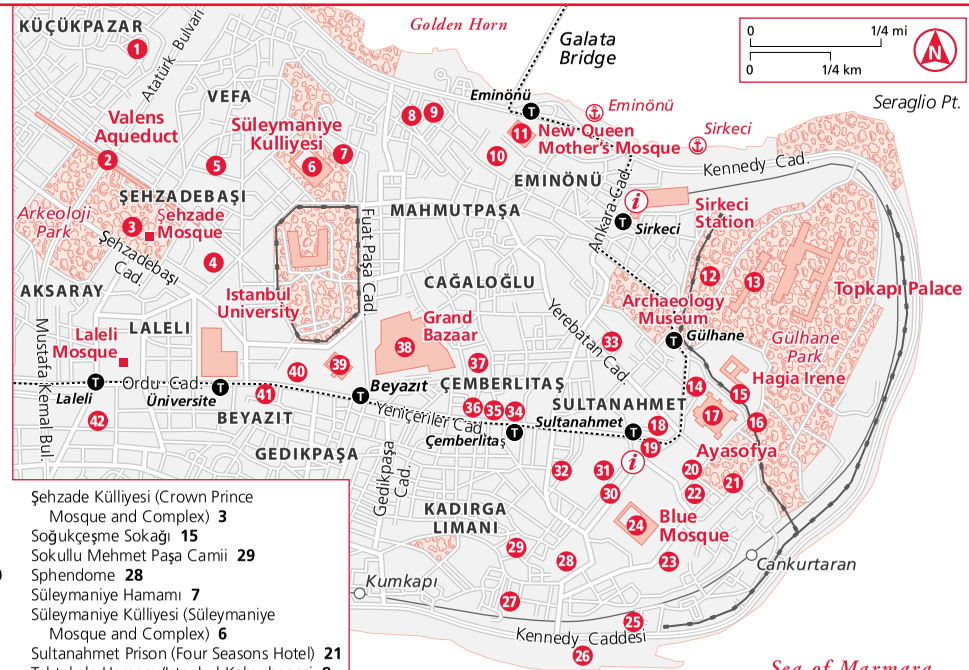
Fun Facts **Sizing up the Dome**

At 46m (151 ft., 1 in.) in height, the Statue of Liberty (less the pedestal) could fit under the dome with 10m (33 ft.) to spare.

In the Upper Galleries are some of the best mosaics in the church (restoration just recently completed; thus the additional entrance fee), as well as decorative paintings, and a closer look at the dome. The **western gallery** (directly opposite the apse), called the **Loge of the Empress,** provided a front-row seat for the empress and her retinue to the activities below. A green stone at the center of the Loge indicates the location of the best seat in the house—the spot where the empress's throne was positioned. In the southern gallery is one of the more recent mosaics, the **Deesis** ★★★, dating to around the 14th century. The composition depicting Christ, his mother, and St. John the Baptist pleading for the salvation of mankind is considered to be one of Byzantium's most striking mosaics, in spite of the missing lower two-thirds. (Another Deesis in the church dates to the 10th c. A.D. at the latest, in an area of the **southern gallery** not open to the public.) Opposite the Deesis is the alleged **tomb of Enrico Dandalo,** the blind Venetian doge whose success in diverting the Fourth Crusade to Constantinople resulted in his capture of the city in 1204. Along the balcony railing near the Deesis is the graffiti of a 9th-century-A.D. Viking—the equivalent to "Halvdan was here." At the far eastern end of the gallery near the apse are two imperial mosaics: one depicting **Empress Zoë** ★★ with her third husband, Constantine IX Monomachus (see "Face-Off in the Corner," below), separated by a figure of Christ, and a mosaic portrait of **Emperor John II Comnenus and Empress Eirene, flanked by Mother and Child** ★★. The side panel is a depiction of the empress and emperor's son, Prince Alexius (extended onto the panel on the wall to the right).

It's worth it to backtrack over to the north gallery to go on a treasure hunt for the **10th-century mosaic of Emperor Alexander** ★. Depicting the emperor in full medieval regalia, the mosaic was believed to be lost to the earthquake of 1894. But while over time the other mosaics had been plastered over, this one had been camouflaged by paint applied to match the surrounding patterns.

One of the more recent and significant discoveries is a 1.5m (16-sq.-ft.) mosaic panel of a **Six-Winged Seraphim** ★★, obscured from the light of day since Swiss architect Gaspare Fossati headed restorations on the basilica in 1847–49. The seraphim is believed to be one of four mosaic angels depicted in each of the four pendentives of the dome as guardians of heaven, two of which were "restored" by re-creating the mosaics in paint.



Arch of Theodosius **41**
Atik Alipaşa Camii **36**
Ayasofya **17**
Beyazıt Külliyesi **39**
Binbirdirek Sarnıçı **32**
Blue Mosque (Sultanahmet Camii) **24**
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Çemberlitaş Hamamı **34**
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Grand Bazaar/Kapalı Çarşısı **38**
Haseki Sultan Hamamı/Ministry of Culture carpet shop **20**
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Hünkar Kasrı **11**
Istanbul Archaeology Museum (Arkeoloji Müzesi) **13**
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Kalenderhane Camii **4**
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Les Arts Turcs **18**
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Museum of Calligraphy **40**
Museum of the History of Islamic Science and Technology (Islam Bilim ve Teknoloji Tarihi Müzesi) **12**
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts **31**
Nuruosmaniye Külliyesi **37**
Rüstem Paşa Külliyesi **9**

Şehzade Külliyesi (Crown Prince Mosque and Complex) **3**
Soğukçeşme Sokağı **15**
Sokullu Mehmet Paşa Camii **29**
Sphendome **28**
Süleymaniye Hamamı **7**
Süleymaniye Külliyesi (Süleymaniye Mosque and Complex) **6**
Sultanahmet Prison (Four Seasons Hotel) **21**
Tahtakale Hamamı/Istanbul Kahvehanesi **8**
Topkapı Palace entrance **16**
Vakıflar Halı Müzesi (Foundation Carpet Museum) **24**
Valens Aqueduct (Bozdoğan Kemeri) **2**

Yeni Valide Camii (Yeni Camii/ The New Queen Mother's Mosque) **11**
Yerebatan Cistern (Yerebatan Sarnıçı) **19**
Zeyrek Camii (Church of the Pantocrator) **1**

Fun Facts Face-Off in the Corner

Empress Zoë had a lot of clout in the early part of the second millennium. First she had this glorious golden mosaic, found at the end of the upper gallery, crafted in her honor, depicting Christ between herself and her first husband. When her husband died in 1034, she ordered the tiles of his face along with the inscription replaced to accommodate her second husband, repeating the procedure for the third.

Bring binoculars, because although the faces are an ample 1.5m × 1m (5 ft. × 3 ft.) in size, from the ground it is almost invisible (but hopefully no longer obscured by scaffolding by the time you read this).

Exit the church through the small **Vestibule of Warriors** in the inner narthex opposite the ramp to the upper gallery. Previously used as an entrance, this is now an exit, so you're forced to turn around to view the mosaic lunette depicting an enthroned **Virgin Mother and Child** ★★★, flanked by Constantine proffering a model of the city and Justinian offering a model (inaccurate) of the Ayasofya. (A mirror has been placed above the current exit to alert you to the mosaic behind you.)

Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/522-1750.** www.kultur.gov.tr. Admission 10TL to the grounds/museum; an additional 10TL for the Imperial Gallery. Tues–Sun 9am–4:30pm. Tram: Sultanahmet.

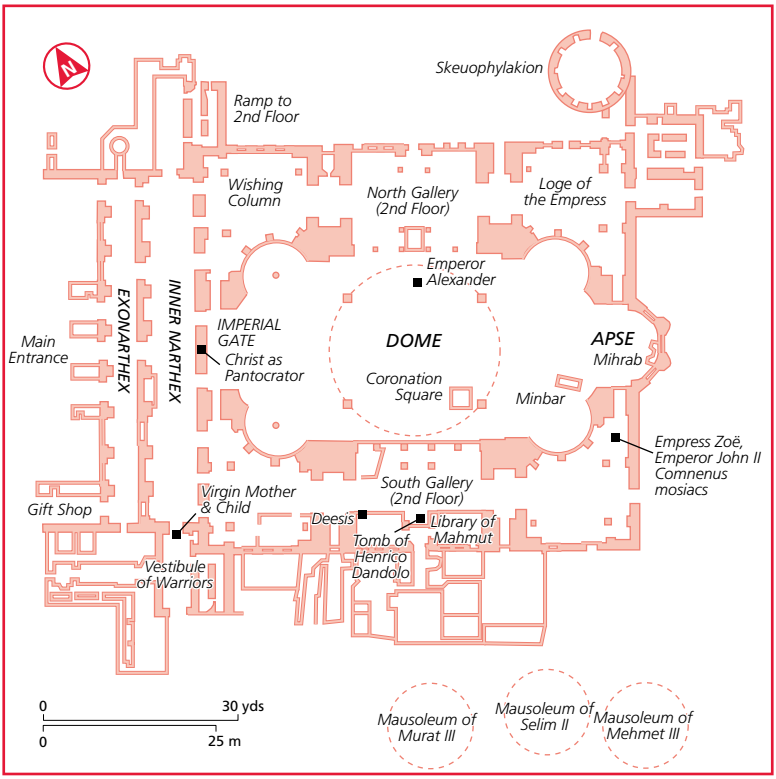
Blue Mosque (Sultan Ahmet Camii) ★★★ This grand bubble of masonry, one of the great and defining features of Istanbul's skyline, was constructed between 1609 and 1617 by Sultan Ahmet I, who was not only driven by a desire to leave behind an imperial namesake mosque, but was also determined to build a monument to rival the Ayasofya. So great was the Sultan's ambition that he had one unfortunate architect executed before finally choosing Mehmet Ağa, probably a student of Sinan, who came up with a plan commonly accepted as impossible to build. The design is a scheme of successively descending smaller domes that addresses the problem of creating a large, covered interior space. The overall effect is one of such great harmony, grace, and power that it's impossible to walk away from this building unaffected.

Fun Facts Did You Know?

Approximately 21,000 tiles were used to decorate the Blue Mosque.

Several legends are associated with the construction of the **six minarets.** One says that the sultan's desire for gold minarets—*altın* in Turkish—was understood as *altı,* or six. Whatever the reasoning, the construction challenged the preeminence of the mosque in Mecca, which at the time also had six minarets. The ensuing scandal, both in and out of Istanbul, resulted in the sultan's ordering the construction of a seventh minaret at the Kaa'ba.

The mosque was completed after just over 6½ years of work and to this day remains one of the finest examples of classical Ottoman architecture. The original complex included a soup kitchen, a *medrese* (Muslim theological school), a primary school, a hospital, and a market. A ***türbe,*** or mausoleum, stands at the corner of the grounds near the Hippodrome and Sultanahmet Park, and houses the remains of Sultan Ahmet I; his wife, Kösem; and three of his sons. It also contains some fine examples of calligraphy on cobalt-blue Iznik tile.



The main entrance (for worshipers; tourists must enter from a portal on the south side) is off the **Hippodrome,** beneath the symbolic chain that required even the sultan to bow his head when he arrived on horseback. Walk straight through the garden up to the main marbled courtyard of the mosque and you'll see an ablution fountain, no longer in use. The working ablution fountains are located at the ground level of the northern facade facing the Ayasofya. Visitors should enter from the opposite side (from the Hippodrome entrance, follow the garden path diagonally to your right to the south side of the mosque).

If you plan your visit during the morning hours when the sun is still angled from the east, the first effect once inside will be one of blindness as the light penetrates the stained glass, creating an illusion of false darkness. As your eyes adjust, the swirling blues, greens, reds, and yellows from the tile and stained glass increase the impression of immensity and grandeur. The abundant use of decorative tile represents the pinnacle of **Iznik tile** ★★★ craftsmanship, evident in the rich yet subtle blues and greens in traditional Ottoman patterns of lilies, tulips, and carnations. The overall dominance of blue prompted the mosque's early visitors to label it the Blue Mosque, a name that sticks to this day.

The Imperial Ottoman Mosque

The majority of the mosques in Istanbul, and those highlighted in this book, are Ottoman Imperial structures. As their architecture is about the evolution of prayer space, there is no one floor plan per se, such as the cross plan of a Catholic church. However, you will notice several recurring elements:

- ***avlu:*** A monumental courtyard preceding the entryway to the mosque.
- ***hünkar mahfili:*** The sultan's loge, located in variable places and only in imperial mosques. This is where the sultan would (privately) attend services.
- ***kürsü:*** Generally located to the left of the *mihrab,* this is where the imam sits when reading from the Koran.
- ***mihrab:*** The niche indicating the *kıble,* or direction of Mecca.
- ***mimbar*** (or ***minbar***): The "pulpit" from which the imam delivers his sermon.
- ***minaret:*** The more minarets, the more prestigious the building/builder/namesake. The Blue Mosque, with its six minarets, is the only one in the world to match the number of minarets on the mosque in Mecca.
- ***şadırvan:*** An ornamental fountain, usually at the center of the courtyard, for ritual ablutions. In practice, these are decorative, and worshipers use faucets available on the side of the mosque.
- ***şerefe:*** The balcony of the minaret from which the *muezzin* calls the faithful to prayer.

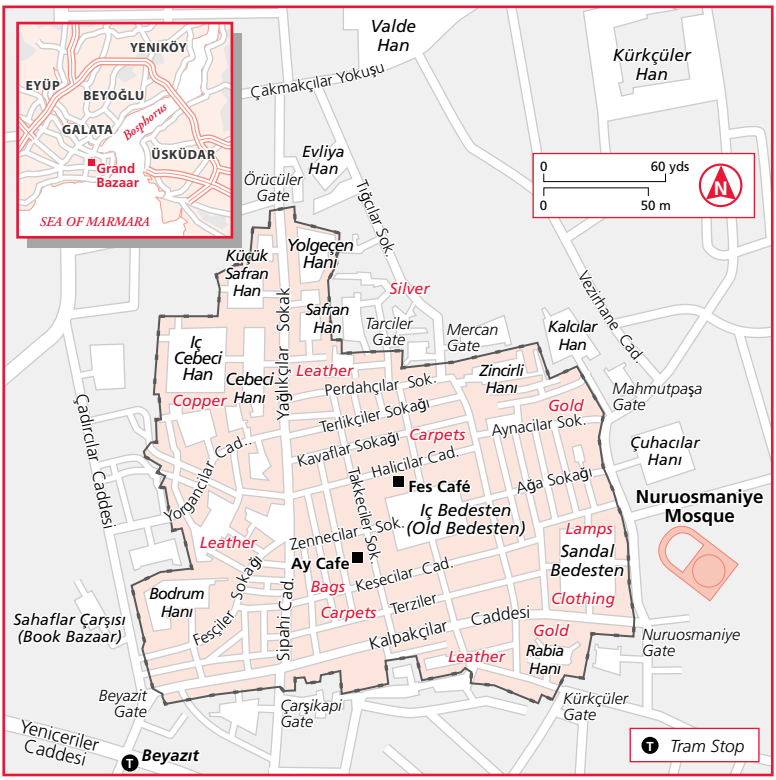
Some Imperial and philanthropic mosques were the centerpiece of an entire complex, or *külliye,* serving the community. This complex would include some of the following: hospital, soup kitchen, primary school, public bath, public fountains, tombs/mausoleums, and a market.

Lateral half **domes** resting on enormous elephantine **columns** ★★ (actually called elephant-foot pillars) enhance the sense of open space, but critics contend that the pillars are too overbearing and cumbersome. The elegant **medallions** ★ facing the *mihrab* bear the names of Allah and Mohammed; the ones opposite are decorated with the names of the first four caliphs who ruled the Islamic world.

Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/458-0776.** Closed to visitors during prayer times. Tram: Sultanahmet.

Grand Bazaar (Kapalı Çarşısı) ★★★ The mother of all tourist traps, the Grand or Covered Bazaar is a vivid illustration of all that's gone wrong with the free market. The Grand Bazaar is actually the center of a commercial area within and around the covered section of the market that spreads all the way down the hill to Eminönü. The name "Grand Bazaar" refers to a vast collection of over 4,000 shops, 24 *hans* (privately owned inns or marketplaces), 65 streets, 22 gates, 2 *bedestens* (covered markets), restaurants, mosques, fountains, and teahouses within an area of 31 hectares (76 acres). "Kapalı Çarşı" refers specifically to the indoor and covered portion.

At the heart and soul of the bazaar are two *bedestens* (covered markets), ordered built by Mehmet the Conqueror for the purpose of gaining revenue for the Ayasofya. These were the **Iç, or Inner Bedesten** (more commonly known as the Old Bedesten), and the **Sandal Bedesten.** These two rectangular structures are typical *bedestens,* meaning that



they are solid, significant, and capped by rows of vaults and domes covering a perimeter of cells surrounding an inner courtyard. Ottoman merchants gravitated to this center of commerce; it is estimated that by the end of Mehmet II's rule, the bazaar had already grown to a third of its current size. Artisans tended to congregate in one area, a legacy handed down through names of streets such as Fez Makers Street (Fesçiler Sok.), Street of the Washcloth Makers (Aynacilar Sok.), and Street of Fur Makers (Kürkçüler Sok.).

A number of characteristic *hans* that at one time (and now nominally) operated around a particular craft or trade are situated in and around the covered portion (or Kapalı Çarşı) of the Grand Bazaar. Of particular note inside the Kapalı Çarşı is the **Safran Han** (stuffing/sewing pillows and mattresses). Beyond the covered portion are the 17th-century **Valde Han** (weaving on looms), the **Çuhacılar Hanı** (antique silver and jewelry), and the 15th-century **Kürkçüler Han,** the oldest one still in use (yarns and knitting supplies; the furs are upstairs).

Over the centuries, the shops around the bazaar fell victim to a total of 10 fires and two earthquakes; the current configuration dates to 1894, when the Minister of Public Works under Abdülhamid II reorganized the bazaar following that year's earthquake.

Tips Cafes & Eateries in the Grand Bazaar

Need a shot of caffeine? **Café Ist,** Tarakçılar Cad. (✆ **0212/527-9353**), and **Fes Café,** Halıcılar Cad. 62 (✆ **0212/528-1613**), both located in the Grand Bazaar, are open Monday through Saturday 8:30am to 7pm, and offer sanctuary from endless cups of Nescafé with a wide selection of coffees, flavored teas, and fresh-squeezed juices. Fes also has a bistro just outside the Nuruosmaniye Mosque at Ali Baba Türbe Sok. 25/27 (✆ **0212/526-3070**). Two new spots are both husband-and-wife-team enterprises: **Julia's Kitchen,** Keseçiler Cad. 110–112 (✆ **0212/512-9677**), serves basic Turkish appetizers, home cooking, and even cookies for teatime; **Café Sultan,** Halıcılar Cad. (✆ **0212/527-0145**), has salads drizzled in some very interesting dressings, along with sandwiches and baked goods.

Today, the main drag running from the Nuruosmaniye Gate to the Beyazıt Gate is **Kalpakçilar Caddesi** ★, the glittering main thoroughfare lined on either side with shops of silver and gold, with anything and everything of your heart's desire elsewhere in the market.

Beyazıt. www.grandbazaaristanbul.org. Free admission. Best entrances through the Beyazıt Gate (across from the Beyazıt stop on the tram along Divanyolu) and the Nuruosmaniye Gate (from the Çemberlitaş tram stop on Divanyolu; follow Vezirhanı Cad. to the arched entrance to the mosque grounds, which lead to the bazaar). Mon–Sat 9am–7pm. Closed national holidays. Shops close early during Ramadan. Tram: Sultanahmet.

Hippodrome ★ Watching the modestly clothed couples with their children strolling through this park on a Sunday afternoon, it's hard to imagine the centuries of rowdy chariot races, ostentatious royal celebrations, and bloody massacres that took place on these lawns. During the month of Ramadan, the trees above the park are strung with white lights, and temporary tents and imitation Ottoman houses full of fast food are set up along the perimeter, while a pink-and-blue fiberglass elephant ride for toddlers wipes away any remaining stains of the Hippodrome's complex past.

Polo games and horse races were popular sports in the day. The first track was built in A.D. 203 by Septimus Severus out of the ruins of the city he sacked. Modeled on the Circus Maximus in Rome, the Hippodrome was enlarged by Constantine in A.D. 324 through the help of supporting vaults and hefty stone walls on the southern portion of the tract. The lower areas (the **Spherion,** or retaining wall down the hill at the obelisk end of the park) were used as stables and quarters for the gladiators.

Forty rows of seats accommodated up to 100,000 agitated supporters divided into merchant guilds that over time degenerated into political rivalries. These factions were known as the Blues, Greens, Reds, and Whites. The Blues and Greens put aside their disagreements to demonstrate against the emperor in A.D. 532, which resulted in a riot with protesters screaming "Nika!" (Greek for victory). In what would become known as the Nika Revolt, much of the imperial palace and the original church of Ayasofya were destroyed. Justinian eventually regained control of his throne and ordered the massacre of some 30,000 to 40,000 people as punishment. With the arrival of the Fourth Crusade, the Hippodrome fell into disuse, eventually serving as a marble quarry for the Ottomans after their conquest of the city.

At the height of its splendor, the Hippodrome was crowned with a vast collection of trophies, statues, and monuments, either crafted by local artisans or lifted from the far corners of the empire.

At the southern end of the park is the **Magnetic Column** ★★, also known as the Walled Obelisk, the Plaited Column, the Colossus, and the Column of Constantine. This column was erected in the 10th century A.D. under Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and was faced with plaques of gilded bronze and brass plates. At one time this obelisk was used to support a pulley system for raising and lowering awnings to protect the spectators from the sun. In 1204 the bronze and brass plates were removed and smelted by the Crusaders to mint coins.

Farther along is the **Serpentine Column** ★★, a squat spiral standing 25% lower than its original 8m (26 ft.). The column was originally erected outside the Temple of Apollo at Delphi by the 31 Greek city-states to commemorate their victory over the Persians, and later brought to the city by Constantine. Made of melded bronze, the column represents three intertwining serpents and was crowned by three gold serpents' heads supporting a gold bowl, said to have been cast from the shields of the fallen Persian soldiers. The heads were lost until one resurfaced during the restoration of the Ayasofya, now in the Archaeology Museum. A second head was discovered and, like many ancient Turkish monuments, slithered its way to the British Museum in London.

The **Obelisk of Tutmosis III** ★★★ is easily one of the most astounding feats of engineering in the city. This 13th-century-B.C. solid block of granite weighing over 60 tons was brought to Istanbul by Emperor Theodosius I from its place in front of the Temple of Luxor at Karnak, in Egypt. The four sides of granite are covered from top to bottom with hieroglyphics celebrating the glory of the Pharaoh and the god Horus. The monument was placed in the square in A.D. 390, but *two-thirds* of the original was lost during transport. This portion, standing over 20m (65 ft.) high, was erected in under 30 days, on a Roman base depicting bas-reliefs of Theodosius's family, friends, and triumphs at the races.

At the northern end of the Hippodrome is the **Fountain of Wilhelm II (Alman Çeşmesi)** ★★, crafted in Germany and assembled in Istanbul to commemorate the emperor's visit to the city in 1895. Notice the initials of both the German monarch and Sultan Abdülhamid on the interior of the dome, inlaid with glittering golden mosaics.

The Hippodrome's crowning monument, long a distant memory of its original grandeur atop a disappeared imperial loggia, was a monumental **statue of four bronze**

Tips Fishing for Customers: Local Shop "Commissioners"

The dregs of Turkish society mill around the entrances to the major sites in Sultanahmet (Blue Mosque, Ayasofya, Topkapı, and the Hippodrome), lying in wait to pounce on you (and a percentage of anything you buy) with apparently harmless—even helpful—offers of assistance. It's called "fishing" in local jargon, and you're the fish. The point is to gain your confidence, so that you trust this person and the people/places/shops he recommends. If you don't mind the company, that's your choice. But in the event you buy, rest assured that after the transaction is completed, your new friend will find his way back to the shop (or hotel) for his cut. (Also, see "Important Tips for Single Women Travelers," in chapter 3.)

horses. In the Fourth Crusade's looting of the city in 1204, the monument was carried away to grace the facade of the Basilica of St. Marco in Venice. (Today, the ones on the facade are fake; the real ones are being protected from the elements in the Basilica of St. Marco's museum.)

Just to the north of the Hippodrome (on the corner where Divanyolu and Yerebatan Cad. converge) is the **Million (or Milion) Stone,** the point of departure for all roads leading out of the city and essentially ground zero for all measurements. The Milion Stone was modeled after the Milliarium Aureum, erected by Julius Caesar in the Forum in Rome. According to one tradition, the **True Cross** is said to have been brought from Jerusalem to Constantinople and placed by the Milion Stone during the reign of Constantine.

At Meydanı (Horse Plaza), Sultanahmet. Tram: Sultanahmet.

Istanbul Archaeology Museum (Arkeoloji Müzesi) ★★ The Istanbul Archaeology Museum is housed in three buildings just inside the first court of Topkapı Palace and includes the Museum of the Ancient Orient (first building on your left) and the Çinili Köşk (opposite the entrance to the main building). These museums, opened officially in 1891, owe their very existence to Osman Hamdi Bey, a 19th-century Turkish painter, archaeologist, curator, and diplomat who fought for the Antiquities Conservation Act to combat the rampant smuggling of antiquities out of Turkey.

The Istanbul Archaeology Museum houses over one million objects, the most extraordinary of which are the sarcophagi that date back as far as the 4th century B.C. The museum excels, however, in its rich chronological collection of locally found artifacts that shed light on the origins and history of the city.

Near the entrance is a **statue of a lion** representing the only piece saved from the clutches of British archaeologists from the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus. In the halls to the left is a collection of sarcophagi found at Sidon (ancient Syria), representing various architectural styles influenced by outside cultures including Egypt, Phoenicia, and Lycia. The most famous is the **Alexander Sarcophagus ★★★**, covered with astonishingly advanced carvings of battles and the life of Alexander the Great, discovered in 1887 and once believed to have been that of the emperor himself. The discovery that the occupant was in fact Sidonian King Abdalonymos may have initially been disappointing, but it hasn't diminished the impact of this great ancient work of art. Found in the same necropolis at Sidon is the stunningly preserved **Sarcophagus of the Crying Women ★★★**, with 18 intricately carved panels showing figures of women in extreme states of mourning. Don't miss the monumental **Lycian tomb ★★★**, carved in a style befitting a great king and just as impressive in this exhibit as on the hills of Lycia. Farther on is the recently inaugurated **Northern Wing ★★**, which rescues from storage a stunning collection of **monumental sarcophagi ★★★** and partially reconstructed **temple friezes ★★★**.

On the mezzanine level is the exhibit ***Istanbul Through the Ages*** **★★**, a rich and well-presented exhibit that won the museum the Council of Europe Museum Award in 1993. To put the exhibit into perspective, the curators have provided maps, plans, and drawings to illustrate the archaeological findings, displayed thematically, which range from prehistoric artifacts found west of Istanbul to 15th-century Byzantine works of art. The recovered **snake's head ★** from the Serpentine Column in the Hippodrome is on display, as is the 14th-century bell from the Galata Tower. The upper two levels house the Troy exhibit and displays on the evolution of Anatolia over the centuries, as well as sculptures from Cyprus, Syria, and Palestine.

The newly renovated and reopened **Museum of the Ancient Orient** ★★★ is an exceptionally rich collection of artifacts from the earliest civilizations of Anatolia, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Arab continent. The tour begins with pre-Islamic divinities and idols taken from the courtyard of the Al-Ula temple, along with artifacts showing ancient Aramaic inscriptions and a small collection of Egyptian antiquities. Although the individual exhibits are modest in size, the recent upgrade rivals Ankara's archaeological museum for organization and presentation.

Uncovered in the region of Mesopotamia and on display is an **obelisk of Adad-Nirari III** inscribed with cuneiform characters. Of particular significance is a series of colored **mosaic panels** ★★ showing animal reliefs of bulls and dragons with serpents' heads from the monumental Gate of Ishtar, built by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylonia. A pictorial representation on a **Sumerian devotional basin** of girls carrying pitchers of water whose contents are filling an underground source relates to the ancient Mesopotamian belief that the world was surrounded by water, a belief that has provoked questions over the origins of the biblical Great Flood.

With nothing dating more recent than the 1st century A.D., it's a real challenge to find something in this museum that is not of enormous significance. But two of the highlights are easily the fragments of the 13th-century-B.C. **sphinx** ★ from the Yarkapı Gate at Hattuşaş (sadly underappreciated in its positioning against a passage wall) and one of the three known tablets of the **Treaty of Kadesh** ★★, the oldest recorded peace treaty signed between Ramses II and the Hittites in the 13th century B.C., inscribed in Akkadian, the international language of the era. (The Istanbul Archaeology Museum houses two; the third is in the Staatliche Museum in Berlin.)

Across from the Archaeology Museum is the **Çinili Köşk,** a wonderful pavilion of turquoise ceramic tiles whose facade displays eye-catching blue and white calligraphy. The mansion was originally built by Mehmet the Conqueror as a hunting pavilion, and now more appropriately houses the **Museum of Turkish Ceramics.** The museum, which is closed more often than not, contains a modest collection of Anatolian and Selçukian tiles, not the least of which is the 14th-century *mihrab* from the Ibrahim Bey mosque in Karaman in central Anatolia. Other highlights include some fine samples from Iznik and Kütahya, the two most important production centers for pottery, porcelain, and ceramics during the Ottoman period.

Entrance in the first court of Topkapı Palace (2nd portal on the left after St. Irene) and up hill at the back of Gülhane Park. ✆ **0212/520-7740.** Admission 10TL, includes the Museum of the Ancient Orient and the Çinili Köşk. Archaeology Museum and Çinili Köşk: Tues–Sun 9:30am–5pm. Tram: Sultanahmet or Gülhane.

Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts ★ Ibrahim Paşa, swept into slavery by Turkish raids in Greece, became the beloved and trusted boyhood friend of Süleyman the Magnificent. Educated and converted to Islam and eventually appointed grand vizier, Ibrahim Paşa was the sultan's only companion at mealtime, earning him the favored title *serasker sultan* (commander in chief). He also earned the sultan's sister's hand in marriage.

The palace was a gift from the sultan and was built by Sinan. From this very special palace on the Hippodrome, the sultan's family and friends had front-row seats for festivities in the square. Roxelana, the sultan's wife, managed to dispose of her rival in one of her infamous intrigues by convincing the sultan that his grand vizier had become too big for his britches.

The palace now houses the changing exhibitions of the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, a fine collection of calligraphy, peace treaties, several examples of the sultan's

official seal or *tuğra,* and an insightful ethnographic section depicting the lifestyles of nomads and city-dwelling Ottomans.

Ibrahim Paşa Sarayı (on the Hippodrome), Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/518-1805.** www.kultur.gov.tr. Admission 10TL. Tues–Sun 9:30am–5pm. Tram: Sultanahmet.

Topkapı Palace (Topkapı Sarayı) ★★★ Residence of the sultans, administrative seat of the Ottoman Empire for almost 400 years, and the source of legend on life in the harem, Topkapı Palace should be at the top of the list for anyone interested in the vast and exotic world behind the seraglio walls. It's impossible to rush through the palace, so you should allot at least a half-day and be prepared to encounter a few bottlenecks throughout the enclosed exhibition halls, especially in the Holy Relics Room where the ardent faithful, in their religious fervor, tend to obstruct the display cases. Built by Mehmet the Conqueror over the ruins of Constantine's Imperial Palace, Topkapı Palace occupies one of the seven hills of the city at the tip of the historic peninsula overlooking the sea. Since it is easily the most valuable real estate in the city, it doesn't take a brain surgeon to see why this spot was preferable to the original palace situated on an inland tract where the university stands today. Mehmet II began construction of the palace 9 years after his conquest of the city, where the sultans reigned continually until 1855, when Abdülmecid moved the imperial residence up the Bosphorus to Dolmabahçe Palace.

Entrance to the grounds is through the Bab-ı Hümayün Gate at the end of the Babuhümayun Caddesi (also called the Gate of Augustus, for the square outside the gate that in Byzantine times was a busy crossroads called the Forum of Augustus). Serving as the entrance through which the public would access the grounds, the gate would often display the decapitated heads of uncooperative administrators or rebels as a warning to all who entered. Just outside the gate is the **Ahmet III Fountain ★★**, built by Mehmet Ağa in 1729 atop an ancient source of water as a gift to Sultan Ahmet. A poem by the sultan is inscribed in the stone, inviting passersby to "drink the water and pray from the House of Ahmet."

The first courtyard, known as the **Court of the Janissaries,** is a public park of gardens and trees, just as it was in earlier days. Along the center path are the remains of a 5th-century-A.D. Roman cistern. (You can save this for the way out.)

The diagonal path to the left leads to the stunning **Hagia Eirene (St. Irene) ★★★**, the second-largest Byzantine church after Ayasofya, and a church that predates Constantine's conquest of the city. The first temple on the site was dedicated to the goddess Aphrodite until it became the center of Christian activities between A.D. 272 and A.D. 398. During Constantine's pro-Christian reign, the emperor had the church enlarged, and then, following its near destruction in the Nika Revolt (along with that of the Ayasofya), Justinian had it reconstructed. Excavation between 1946 and 1950 indicates that a series of buildings existed connecting the church with the Ayasofya, and the fact

Fun Facts Did You Know?

Whenever a sultan ordered the execution of someone abroad, he would require that the head be brought back to him as proof. Tradition has it that one such victim was none other than Vlad Tepes, a Wallachian nobleman and tyrant better known as Vlad the Impaler (and later as Dracula).

that both churches were completed and rededicated at about the same time indicates that these houses of worship were in some way part of an ecclesiastical complex. The buildings were later demolished to make room for construction of the palace walls. Rumor has it that Mehmet the Conqueror's Italian consort convinced him to store the house porcelain there, where she could then secretly go and pray, but for the record, the Ottomans used the church as an arsenal. Hagia Eirene is closed to the public but is used as a venue for concerts and recitals. The church may be opened on special request (✆ **0212/520-6952**).

The ticket booths to the palace are located on the right side of the courtyard. Proceed to the Ortakapı (middle gate), known as the **Gate of Salutation** ★, roughly translated from the Arabic (Turkish version) *Babüsselâm.* Added by Süleyman the Magnificent in 1524, this gate signaled to all but the sultan to dismount before proceeding into the palace. On either side of the gate are two octagonal towers that essentially served as death row for those who fell out of favor; after a prisoner's execution, the body would be left outside the gate. To the right of the gate (facing) is a marble fountain where the executioner would wash the blood off his hands before reentering the palace.

Begin your visit with the **Palace Kitchens** ★★, a complex comprised of a string of lofty chambers topped by a series of chimney-domes, a narrow inner courtyard, and a smaller string of rooms. The largest in the world, the kitchens at one time employed over 1,000 servants working day and night to serve the 5,000 residents of the palace, a number that swelled to 15,000 during Ramadan. At the far end is the original wooden kitchen that survived a 16th-century fire; Sinan, who reconstructed the kitchens, added the massive conical chimneys and enlarged the original space. Suspended from the iron bars in the ceiling were the cauldrons, raised or lowered over the fire pits below according to the desired intensity of the flame. The kitchens are now used to exhibit the palace's rich collection of **porcelain** ★ numbering close to 12,000 pieces, not all of which are displayed. Topkapı houses the third-most-important collection of porcelain in the world, after Beijing and Dresden, while the palace's collection of celadons surpasses that of Beijing because the Chinese destroyed all of theirs during the Cultural Revolution. Besides these 4th- and 5th-century-A.D. celadons are pieces from the Sung and Yuan dynasties (9th–13th c. A.D.), pieces from the Ming Dynasty (14th–17th c.), and porcelain from the Ching Dynasty (16th–20th c.). Many of these treasures found their way to Istanbul as gifts exchanged between the Ottomans, Chinese, and Persians as symbols of solidarity toward the maintenance and protection of the roads. There's also a rich collection of silver, particularly coffee services, candelabras, and mirrors (ornamented on the backside because of the proscription requiring the reflective side to be lain facedown), and a display of Venetian glass and Bohemian crystal. The Ahmet III Fountain outside the main entrance is reproduced here in a stunning mass of silver, but there are examples of collectibles on a less grandiose scale as well.

Fun Facts — Better Safe than Sorry

Sultans preferred to eat off celadon china because the pigments changed color when put in contact with poisons.

Following a direct path along the length of the palace grounds, proceed to the **Gate of Felicity (Babüssaade)** ★, also known as the Gate of the White Eunuchs. For 400 years, enthronement ceremonies were held at the entrance to this gate, today used as a

backdrop for the annual presentation of Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio* during the International Istanbul Music Festival. Decapitated heads found their way above this gate as well. Only the sultan and the grand vizier were allowed past this gate into the third courtyard (while the Valide Sultan used a back gate for entrances and exits), the private quarters of the palace. Immediately inside the Gate of Felicity and acting as a visual barrier to the private quarters beyond is the **Throne Room** ★, a pavilion used by the sultan as an audience chamber to receive (or affront) visiting ambassadors. Notice the interlocking marble used in the construction of the arched doorway; this design technique reinforced the archway and protected it against earthquakes.

Directly to the right is the Seferliler Quarters, now housing the **Palace Clothing Exhibition** or Imperial Wardrobe. Because the sultan's clothing was considered to be holy, a sultan's wardrobe would be wrapped up and preserved in the palace. This opulent display of silk, brocade, and gold-threaded clothing is only a small portion of the whole collection and includes enormously baggy costumes (to give the sultan the visual advantage of size), along with caftans and other garments showing influences from around the empire.

Past the Palace Clothing Exhibition is the Fatih Pavilion, containing a recently restored exhibition of the **Treasury** ★★★, one of the greatest collections of treasures in the world. In 400 years a sultan can amass a great quantity of wealth, supplied through spoils of war, gifts from neighboring kings and queens, and the odd impulse buy. The rooms were off-limits to everyone but the sultan, and in his absence, any visitor was required to be accompanied by at least 40 other men.

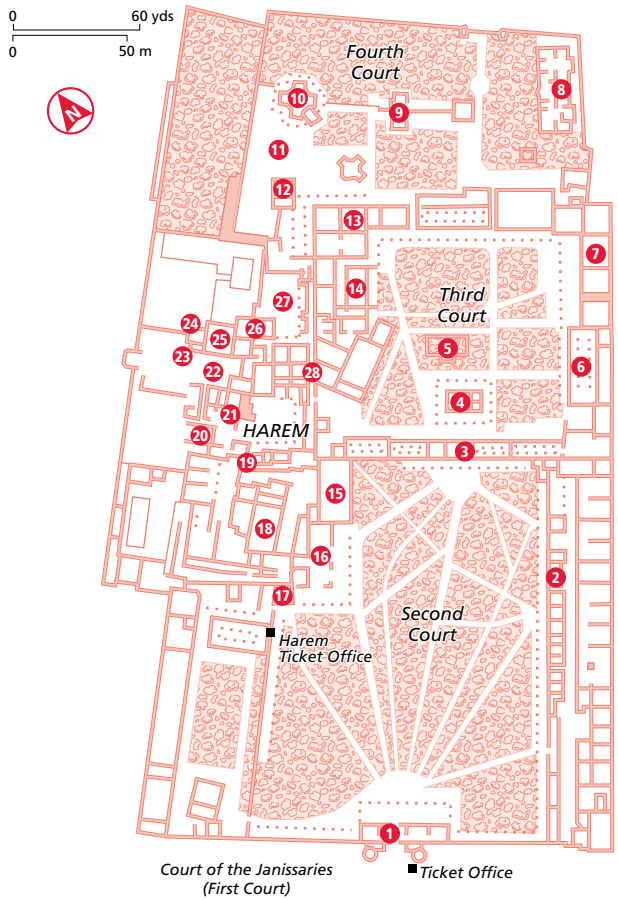
Room no. 1 of the Treasury is a collection of Ottoman objects and **ceremonial thrones** ★★★, including one in pure gold, weighing in at 250 kilograms (550 lb.), presented to Murat III in 1585 by the Egyptian governor; an ebony throne crafted for Süleyman the Magnificent; and a jewel-encrusted throne presented to Mahmut I by Nadir Shah of India.

The eye is immediately drawn to the jewel-studded mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell throne of Sultan Ahmet I, crafted by the master of inlay, Mehmet Ağa, the same man commissioned by the sultan to build the Blue Mosque. (Rumor has it that during his 1995 visit, Michael Jackson requested permission to sit in one of the thrones; however, his request was denied.) Also of note in room no. 1 is the **sword** belonging to Süleyman the Magnificent, with his name and title inscribed on the blade.

Room no. 2 of the Treasury displays a collection of medals and non-Ottoman objects and gifts (or plunder) received through the spoils of war. Highlights include figurines crafted in India from seed pearls, and in the same case, a miniature tree of life and a vessel presented as gifts to the tomb of Mohammed.

The focus of room no. 3 is a pair of shoulder-high **candlesticks** ★ crafted of solid gold, caked with several thousand brilliants/diamonds, and weighing over 48 kilograms (105 lb.) each. In a world absent of electricity, candlesticks like these would be placed on either side of the *mihrab* to provide light for the reading of the holy book. This pair was presented to the tomb of Mohammed in Medina and brought back to Istanbul after World War I. The rest of the exhibit in room no. 3, an overwhelming collection of jade, rock crystal, zinc, emeralds, and other precious gems, displays Ottoman objects made by artists and craftsmen for the sultans throughout the centuries.

Room no. 4 is the Treasury's *pièce de résistance,* a breathtaking view into the wealth of the Ottoman Empire. The famous **Topkapı Dagger** ★ is here, weighted down by a row of emeralds and diamonds in the hilt and on the cover. This dagger was the protagonist



Ahmet III Library **5**
Apartment of the Valide Sultan **20**
Baghdad Kiosk **10**
Barracks of the Black Eunuchs **18**
The Cage **26**
Carriage Gate **17**
Circumcision rooms **12**
Courtyard of the Favorites **27**
Dormitory of the Pages of the Imperial Treasury **13**
Fruit Room **23**
Gate of Felicity **3**
Golden Road **28**
Iftariye Pavilion **11**
Imperial Armory **15**
Imperial Council Hall/Divan **16**
Imperial Reception Hall **22**
Konyalı Restaurant **8**
Mustafa Paşa Kiosk **9**
Ortakapı/Gate of Salutation **1**
Palace Clothing Exhibition **6**
Palace Kitchens **2**
Portraits of Ottoman sultans **14**
Private Chambers of Murat III **25**
Quarters of the concubines **19**
Reading Room **24**
Sofa Köşkü **9**
Sultan's private bath **21**
Throne Room **4**
Treasury **7**

Tips Topkapı Palace Lunch Break

After touring the Treasury, you've reached the halfway point and a good place to stop for lunch or drinks. The expansive **Konyalı restaurant** (✆ **0212/513-9696;** p. 103) includes indoor and outdoor dining rooms, as well as an outdoor cafeteria-style snack bar.

in the 1964 film *Topkapı* (with Peter Ustinov), an amusing film about a plot to rob the Palace Museum. The actual dagger was intended as a gift from Sultan Mahmud I to Nadir Shah to warn him of an impending conspiracy on his life, but was returned by the couriers following a bloody revolution in which the shah was killed.

You'll notice a group of people hovering around a case at the far end of room no. 4, displaying the 86-karat **Spoonmaker's Diamond** ★★, or Kaşıkçı Diamond, the fifth-largest diamond in the world, glittering in a setting of 49 smaller diamonds. The diamond was actually discovered in the 17th century in a city dump by a local peddler who sold it to a jeweler for pennies.

The exhibit finishes with a stunning collection of "lesser" diamonds and gems, plus the **gold and jewel–encrusted chain mail** ★★ of Sultan Mustafa III. Also of note is the **ceremonial sword** ★, attributed to either Caliph Osman (7th c. A.D.) or Osman Gazi (13th c.) and used in any sultan's inauguration, usually in front of Eyüp Sultan Mosque.

Another piece of note is the **golden cradle** ★★ in which newborn sons were presented to the sultans, as well as an **emerald pendant** ★ with 48 strings of pearls originally sent by Sultan Abdülhamid I as a gift to the tomb of the Prophet Mohammed in Mecca. The pendant was returned to Istanbul after Mecca was no longer within the borders of the empire.

Exit the courtyard down the stairs to the right through a long passage. To the right and parallel to the sea is the second terrace, affording one of the best views in the city. Imagine the days of seaside attacks on the palace walls as you watch the maritime traffic go by. During Byzantine times, a chain composed of links .8m (2½ ft.) long was forged to span the Golden Horn and prevent enemy ships from accessing the waterway.

This fourth courtyard was the realm of the sultan, and a stroll around the gardens will reveal some lovely examples of Ottoman kiosk architecture. Near the center of the upper level of the courtyard is the **Mustafa Paşa Kiosk,** the oldest building in the complex, which served as the physician's quarters and as a wardrobe for the sultan needing to effect swift changes during state functions. From the picture window overlooking the gardens, the sultan was known to observe wrestling matches, and even join in every now and again.

Perched on the upper terrace at the northernmost corner of the palace complex is the **Baghdad Kiosk** ★, magnificently sited to take best advantage of the views of the Golden Horn. The kiosk is decorated with priceless Iznik tiles, both inside and out. In addition to the tiles, the interior space is embellished with stained glass and crowned by a dome decorated with a traditional Ottoman motif in gold leaf. The kiosk served the sultan in colder weather; occupants of the kiosk were warmed by the central brazier. The **Sofa Köşkü** is the only surviving wooden pavilion in the palace. The golden-roofed **Iftariye Pavilion,** or "pavilion for breaking the fast," is the covered balcony on the northern edge of the courtyard, also called the *Mehtaplık,* or "Moon Place."

The **circumcision rooms,** rarely opened to the public, are also located in the fourth courtyard.

Backtrack through the passage and up the steps into the third courtyard. To the right past the Museum Directorate is the **Dormitory of the Pages of the Imperial Treasury,** formerly used to display decorative calligraphy from the Koran as well as jeweled Koran sets. At the far corner of the third courtyard is the **Holy Relic Section** ★★★, the largest collection in the world of this type, containing the personal belongings of the Prophet Mohammed, the caliphs, and even the unexpected **staff of Moses** ★. Also on display is a piece of St. John the Baptist's skull and a section of his forearm, enclosed within a solid-gold model. The items on display were brought back to Istanbul by Selim the Grim in 1517, following his conquest of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and after declaring himself caliph. Since the Kaa'ba was restored annually, pieces of the mosque were regularly kept as ornamentation for mosques. This collection was off-limits to anyone but the most favored members of the sultan's family and was open to public viewing only in 1962. The domed space is ornamented with Iznik tiles and quotations from the Koran along with a priceless set of rain gutters, an intricately carved door, and an old set of keys taken from the Kaa'ba. Directly opposite the entrance are the **four sabers** belonging to the first four caliphs, and the first-ever copy of the **Koran** ★, documented on deerskin.

To the right is the **Mohammed Chamber** ★★★, fronted by a booth in which an *imam* (religious guide) has been reciting passages from the Koran continually for the past 500 years. This tradition was started by Mehmet II and sets the stage for the collection of holy relics within. The **golden cloth** ★ that once covered the black stone in the central courtyard of the Kaa'ba in Mecca now hangs in this exhibit, as a new one is richly prepared each year. The display cases here are almost always hidden behind fervent religious visitors communing with the spirit of the prophet through **relics** ★★ of his hair, a tooth, his footprints, and even soil from his grave. The **Holy Mantle,** the most sacred item in the collection, is contained in a **gold coffer** ★★ and sequestered behind a grilled door.

Turkish and Iranian miniatures as well as **portraits of Ottoman sultans** are exhibited in the rooms next to the one containing the Holy Relics. While the original collection amounts to a total of 13,000 specimens, this exhibit comes nowhere near this number. The main draw is the collection of portraits (both copies and originals) modeled after those painted by some of the Renaissance's most celebrated artists (Veronese, Bellini). Lacking any record of the physiological characteristics of the first 12 sultans, the Ottomans had the ones painted by the Venetians brought back to Istanbul in 1579.

Tips Don't Wait to Get into the Harem

To visit the Harem you must purchase a ticket for one of the tours near the Carriage Gate entrance next to the Divan; your tour time will be indicated on your ticket. Tours depart on the half-hour and last about 30 minutes. Buy your ticket to the Harem at the beginning of your visit to the palace because when the tour buses arrive, the wait on both the ticket and entry lines can be very long. Of the 400 rooms, only around 20 are on the tour, with explanations that are not always audible or, for that matter, intelligible. Nonetheless, the tour is worth taking.

Fun Facts The Forbidden City

The word *harem,* Arabic for "forbidden," conjures up images of bellybuttons, grapes, and palm trees, and of limitless pleasure, unless you're the one fanning the sultan. The reality was closer to a deluxe prison, a stifling hierarchy of slaves, concubines, and wives from which only a few ever emerged. It was even common practice for a new sultan to drown the concubines of his predecessor, to eliminate the possibility that one might be carrying a child with designs on the throne. The mystery enshrouding these enclosed walls was never truly lifted, and even concubines who survived kept silent.

The institution of the harem was established by Süleyman the Magnificent in 1587 following a fire in the palace in Beyazıt, when the cunning Roxelana convinced him to transfer his residence over to Topkapı. Muslims are exceedingly private people, and these enclosed and restricted quarters served to maintain the "curtain" over the feminine members of his extended family.

In the center of the courtyard is the **Ahmet III Library,** constructed in the 16th century of white marble and recently restored and opened to the public. The bookcases are inlaid with ivory and contain about 6,000 volumes of Arab and Greek manuscripts. The stained glass is from the early 17th century; the platform divan seating is typically Ottoman, and the carpets are over 500 years old.

Return to the second courtyard, where along the right side you will come upon the **Imperial Armory,** a collection of arms and objects acquired during the various military campaigns. Mehmet the Conqueror's sword is here, as is Süleyman the Magnificent's, but it's the unattributed 2.5m (8-ft.) one that really impresses.

Before entering the Harem, take a peek into the **Imperial Council Hall,** or **Divan** ★, constructed during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent. State affairs were conducted here while the sultan eavesdropped from the grate above, which leads directly to the Harem. From this concealed position, the sultan could interrupt proceedings with a motion to his grand vizier and call for a private conference whenever the need arose. His wife, Roxelana, would often secretly attend these sessions, a privilege that ended in several unfortunate fatalities.

The **Harem** ★★ has three main sections: the outer quarters of the Black Eunuchs charged with guarding the Harem; the inner stone courtyard for the concubines; and the apartments facing the sea reserved for the sultan, his mother, favorite concubines, and future heirs to the throne. The tour begins at the **Carriage Gate,** where the sultan's mother and wives would be whisked away unseen by outsiders during exits and entrances. Past the first Guard Room is a long courtyard lined with cells that served as the **Barracks of the Black Eunuchs.** The upper levels were reserved for the younger eunuchs, with the lower cells housing the older ones. Winding through the maze of additions, the tour comes to the **quarters of the concubines,** unheated and often unsanitary rooms around a claustrophobic stone courtyard. The only way out was to be one of the very lucky few chosen by the mother for the sultan; the others were servants to the sultan, or to the girls higher up on the hierarchy. At its most crowded, the Harem housed over 800 concubines. Even if the sultan rotated every night, the numbers were against those girls, and although some were given to the harems of state officials or grand viziers, many died virgins (but who knows what really went on in there . . .).

In contrast, the **Apartment of the Valide Sultan** ★★, the sultan's mother's room, sandwiched between the girls' quarters and the sultan's, is a domed wonder of mother-of-pearl, ivory, tortoiseshell, gold leaf, porcelain tiles, and frosted glass. The apartment consisted of a bedroom, a dining room, a chamber for prayer, and an office around a courtyard.

The **sultan's private bath** ★, furnished with the usual *hamam* gear but infinitely more lush, has a guarded mesh gate so that the sultan could relax without the fear of being disturbed or assassinated. The sultan's apartments are close by, and the visit continues with the **Imperial Reception Hall** ★★, where celebrations or evenings of entertainment took place while musicians played discreetly from the mezzanine. While the sultan presided from his throne, the women adhered to a strict hierarchy, with the most important women seated at the center of the platform.

One of the few rooms preserving the luster of its creator is the grand domed **Private Chambers of Murat III** ★★, built by Sinan in 1578. The walls are covered with a classic blue Iznik tile with red highlights, a prototype that was never duplicated. A frieze of calligraphy runs the perimeter of the room, and elegant panels of flowers and plums surround a bronze fireplace. The room is also called the Fountain Room because of the marble fountain that was kept running to mask conversations not intended for prying ears.

The **Reading Room** used by Ahmet I is a small but well-positioned library that affords distracting views of the convergence of the three waterways: the Golden Horn, the Marmara Sea, and the Bosphorus.

The **Fruit Room** is more of a breakfast nook added by Sultan Ahmet III to his private chambers. One look and it's not hard to figure out how this room got its name. The room is enveloped in fruit and floral overkill, but evidently the sultan's attentions were focused on the Harem pool out the window.

The next stop on the Harem tour is at the twin apartments of the crown prince, better known as the **Cage** ★. In the early years of the empire, a crown prince was well prepared to fulfill his destiny as a leader, beginning his studies in these rooms and later moving on to actual field experience in one of the provinces. When the practice of fratricide was abandoned, brothers of the sultan were sequestered in these rooms, where they either went crazy or languished in the lap of luxury—or both. The opulence of the stained glass, tile work, and mother-of-pearl inlaid cabinets belies the chambers' primary function as a jail cell, which supports a recent discovery that the actual cage was located in another part of the Harem. The tour guides continue to perpetuate the myth by billing these two rooms as the bona fide cage.

Fun Facts **Historic House Calls**

Maimonides, the Spanish/Jewish philosopher and writer, was the personal physician to Sultan Saladdin.

The Harem tour comes to an end at the **Courtyard of the Favorites** ★★, surrounded by a charming building recalling the medieval residences of Florence. The apartments on the upper floors were reserved for the members of the Harem the sultan liked best, enjoying open space and sea views as far as the Princes' Islands. The circular spot in the center of the courtyard was covered with a tent for shaded outings, and the grooves served as water channels for cooling.

The exit to the second courtyard is through the **Golden Road,** a narrow stone corridor that was the crown prince's first taste of the world beyond the stifling confines of the Harem.

Sultanahmet, entrance at the end of Babuhümayun Cad., behind the Ayasofya. ✆ **0212/512-0480.** www.topkapisarayi.gov.tr. Admission to the palace 20TL; separate admission for the Harem 15TL. Wed–Mon 9am–5pm (Harem closes at 4pm). Closed national holidays and at 1pm on the first day of religious festivals. Tram: Sultanahmet or Gülhane.

3 BYZANTINE SIGHTS (OR BYZANTIUM WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY)

Church of Theotokos Pammakaristos (Joyous Mother of God Church, now the Fethiye Camii) This church was built in 1292 by John Comnenus, probably related to the royal family, and his wife Anna Doukaina. Later additions and renovations were made, including the construction of a side chapel in 1315 to house the remains of Michael Glabas, a former general, and his family. In 1456 the Orthodox Patriarchate moved here from the Havariyun (see the Fatih Mosque/Fatih Camii, p. 157) and remained here until 1586. Five years later, Murat III converted the church into a mosque and renamed it in honor of his conquest over Georgia and Azerbaijan. To accommodate a larger inner space for prayer, most of the interior walls were removed.

The interior of the church/mosque contains the best mosaic panels after the Ayasofya and St. Savior in Chora. In the dome is a representation of the Pantocrator surrounded by prophets (Moses, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Micah, Joel, Zechariah, Obadiah, Habakkuk, Jonah, Malachi, Ezekiel, and Isaia). In the apse Christ Hyperagathos is shown with the Virgin and St. John the Baptist. The Baptism of Christ survives intact to the right of the dome.

From the Kariye Camii, follow Draman Cad. (which becomes Fethiye Cad.); turn left onto Fethiyekapısı Sok. (just before the road bends sharply to the right), Fener. ✆ **0212/528-4500.** Admission 5TL. Thurs–Tues 9:30am–4:30pm. Bus: 90 from Eminönü or 90B from Beyazıt.

Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople ★ The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople is the surviving legacy of a religious empire that dominated the affairs of Christians worldwide for more than 1,100 years. After the fall of Rome in A.D. 476, Constantinople inherited unrivaled leadership of the Christian world under the names "Rome of the East" and "New Rome." The Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbians, Romanians, Albanians, and Georgians who adhered to the Eastern Orthodox creed were referred to as "Romans" (thus the reason why many an Istanbul church includes the word "Rum" in its title). While the pope continued to reject the primacy of the Bishop of Constantinople (soon after given the title of Archbishop), the influence of the Patriarch of Constantinople nevertheless grew under the patronage of the emperor. The initial seat of the Patriarchate was pre-Constantine Hagia Eirene, now in the first court of Topkapı Palace. Upon Justinian's completion of the Ayasofya, the Church was rooted here for the next 916 years (with a brief respite when the Byzantine Court was forced to flee to Nicaea after the Fourth Crusade in 1204). The Ottoman conquest displaced the Patriarchate to the Havariyun (or Church of the Twelve Apostles, now lost under Fatih Camii, p. 157), before it moved to the Church of the Pammakaristos (Fethiye Camii) in 1456. In 1587, the Eastern Orthodox Church moved to the Church of the Virgin Mary in Vlah Palace, and then to St. Demetrios in Balat. The Patriarchate settled into its current spot in the

Church of St. George (Ayios Yeoryios) in 1601. In the 19th century, assertions of national independence and religious autonomy whittled the influence of the Patriarchate, until its reach was constricted to the borders of the Turkish Republic and a mere handful of semiautonomous communities abroad. Still, the Orthodox community considers the Ecumenical Patriarchate one of the two most prominent Christian institutions in the world, the other being the Holy See in Rome. Today, the Patriarch and Archbishop of Constantinople is *primus inter pares* or "first among equals," among the 14 autonomous and semiautonomous Patriarchates-in-communion that make up the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The present church was built in 1720 on a traditional basilica plan. It seems to lack the grandeur one would expect of its station, but the building was constructed under the Ottoman prohibition against non-Muslim use of domes or masonry roofs on their places of worship. Instead, it is topped by a timber roof. The gilded iconostasis provides some insight into the opulence one imagines of Byzantium. The Patriarchal Throne is believed to date to St. John Chrysostom Patriarchate in the 5th century A.D. His relics and those of St. Gregory the Theologian, which were hijacked after the 1204 Crusader sacking of the city, were brought back from Rome by Patriarch Bartholomew in 2004. In the aisle opposite these relics are the remains of the female saints, St. Euphemia, St. Theophano, and St. Solomone. There are also three invaluable gold mosaic icons including one of the Virgin, as well as the Column of Flagellation. The small complex is comprised of the modest Cathedral, the Patriarchate Library, administrative offices, and the Ayios Harambalos spring.

Sadrazam Ali Paşa Cad. 35/3, Fener. ✆ **0212/531-9670.** www.ec-patr.org. Daily 8:30am–6pm. Bus: 36CE, 399B, 399C, 399D, 44B, 99, 99A from Eminönü, 35D from Balat, or 55T from Taksim.

Galata Tower and the G alata Neighborhood ★ The neighborhood of Galata, located on a steep hump of land north of the Golden Horn and historic peninsula, actually sits on the earliest foundations of the city, dating, as far as present-day archaeologists can tell, to Greek and Roman times. At one time, it was covered in gardens and vineyards; indeed the ancient Greeks called the district "Sykai," meaning "place of fig gardens," and later, the hilly expanse became known as "peran en Skai," or "fig gardens on the other shore." Or just plain Pera. There is also speculation that the name Galata comes from the Italian word for descent *(calata),* an appropriate description of the steep and staired streets that slope down the hill from Beyoğlu to the Golden Horn. The district developed into its present form in the 13th century, when Eastern Roman Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus granted the Genoese permission to settle here. The district became a magnet for merchants from all over Europe: Italians, Germans, Armenians, Jews, and Austrians, all re-creating their own micro-universe. The Genoese remained neutral during the Ottoman siege, so when Mehmet the Conqueror took over the city, although he installed his own Ottoman administration and assumed control of all

Fun Facts First in Flight

Ahmet Çelebi, later nicknamed Hazarfen ("a thousand sciences"), wins the prize for first in flight, in 1638. Strapped to a pair of artificial wings, Çelebi launched himself off of the Galata Tower and glided across the Bosphorus to Üsküdar on the Asian shore, where he landed safely.

700 Years of Turkish Jews

Jews visiting Turkey inevitably ask for a tour of a local synagogue, and as the default working temple in the heart of Galata, **Neve Shalom** is usually the first and only stop. While interesting to see (particularly after sustaining recurring terrorist attacks), a visit to Neve Shalom is far from the Holy Grail of Jewish sites in Istanbul. It's also not necessarily guaranteed, since a pre-visit request accompanied by a faxed copy of your passport is the *minimum* requirement for entry. (For more information on Istanbul's synagogues and on the Jewish community in general, go to **www.musevicemaati.com**, the official site of the Jewish community.) I'd recommend instead the **Jewish Museum of Turkey,** located in the restored 19th-century Zulfaris Synagogue. The museum represents the vision of the Quincentennial Foundation (named for the 500-year anniversary of the Jewish expulsion from Spain) and showcases the peaceful coexistence of Jews and Turks in Turkey. The foundation's vision came to fruition in 2001 with this anthology of Jewish presence in Turkey beginning with the Ottoman conquest of Bursa, through Sultan Beyazıt's invitation to those expelled from Spain, to the present day. The museum/synagogue is located at Karaköy Meydanı, Perçemli Sokak (facing the lower entrance to the Tünel funicular, Perçemli Sok. is the first alley to your right; the museum is at the end of the street on your right; ✆ **0212/292-6333;** www.muze500.com), and is open Monday through Thursday 10am to 4pm, and Friday and Sunday from 10am to 2pm. There is no admission fee but donations are encouraged.

commercial affairs, the Sultan granted them, along with the other minority communities, substantial commercial privileges. The ensuing commercial prosperity of the district fed trade throughout the Mediterranean and acted as a magnet for foreigners and ethnic minorities who established the district as centers of business, shipping, and banking. Serving the center of the financial district was a row of stately financial institutions lining both sides of what is now alternately called Bankalar Sokağı (Bank St.) and Voyvoda Caddesi. Bankers wishing to settle near their places of business constructed dignified residences for themselves and their families, and serving the community was a full complement of schools, churches, and synagogues. As Galata prospered, the population burst its boundaries to incorporate the neighborhoods northward (and eventually up to and along the Grand Rue de Pera or Istiklal Caddesi). A stroll up and down the steep cobbled streets will reveal schools, private residences, churches, synagogues, and Ottoman-era warehouses. (There are also the ruins of a *mikva* or Jewish bathhouse in dire need of restoration opposite the former private mansion of the Camondo banking family, now the Galata Residence. See, "Walking Tour 1: Galata," p. 191.)

The decline of Galata and its subsequent revitalization are both relatively recent phenomena. With the turn-of-the-20th-century flight of the wealthy merchant class to Istanbul's tonier neighborhoods, Galata deteriorated into a magnet for poor rural migrant families and a location of no fewer than three thriving brothels. In the 1990s, the nation's trend of historic preservation arrived in Galata with an ambitious architectural revitalization project that created an inviting public square and a couple of charming and

Sultanahmet's Streets Paved with Gold: The Great Palace

The Great Palace complex was the primary residence and administrative center of Byzantine (and Roman) emperors from A.D. 330, when it was begun by Constantine, to 1081, when the Comnenus Dynasty moved to Blachernae. In 1204, the palace became the home of the Latin Crusaders-in-Residence, but through their neglect, the palace slowly fell into decline. It was eventually picked over for parts for use in new construction projects. Tradition has it that when Mehmet the Conqueror took the city (by which time the Byzantine dynasty had returned and installed itself into Blachernae and the Great Palace), the sultan's reaction to the state of the palace was to quote a phrase of the Persian poet, Ferdowsi: "The spider spins his web in the Palace of the Caesars . . ."

Constantine's earliest construction was based on Diocletian's palace on the Dalmatian Coast and covered an area of 10 hectares (almost 25 acres) from the Hippodrome to the Marmara Sea. At its peak, the palace was comprised of a complex that included state buildings, throne rooms, gardens, libraries, thermal baths, and fountains (among which were the 5th century A.D. Chalke monumental gate and the Magnaura or Senate building). The Bucoleon (built by Theophilius in A.D. 842) and Justinian's Hormisdas (6th c. A.D.; located to the West of the Bucoleon) were later additions. A few places around the neighborhood provide a peek of these remains. A section of the loggia from the Bucoleon that survived the construction of the commuter train can be seen on the southern edge of the peninsula outside the remains of the sea walls, to the east of Aksakal Caddesi. A mosaic floor of one of the peristyle courtyards of the Great Palace is now the **Mosaic Museum** (see below). Some remains were uncovered in the construction of the Eresin Crown hotel in Sultanahmet, while the Four Seasons project (they're adding a rear annex building) sits right atop the Magnaura.

characteristic outdoor tea gardens at the base of the Galata Tower. In the past 4 or 5 years, the trend has caught fire, as local real estate gets snapped up by artists, expats, and private developers and turned into galleries, cafes, hotels, and private homes. At last look, the plaza surrounding the tower and the storied Galip Dede Caddesi had been repaved and a restoration project was underway at the north corner opposite the tower. But the streets leading down to the Golden Horn, while hosting the odd new tea shop or guesthouse, maintain the grit that has settled on the district since its heyday. For a do-it-yourself walking tour, pick up a copy of John Freely's *Galata,* available at the Galata House restaurant (p. 116) and the bookstores listed in chapter 9. Otherwise, see "Walking Tour 1: Galata," p. 191.

The origins of **Galata Tower** date back to the 5th or 6th century A.D., but the tower that stands today is a 14th-century reconstruction by the Genoese, built in appreciation of Michael VIII Palaeologus, who granted special permission to allow them to settle the area of Galata. One condition of the agreement was that the Genoese were prohibited from putting up any defensive walls, a ban that they unceremoniously ignored.

The Galata Tower has been used as a jail, a dormitory, a site for rappelling competitions, and a launching pad in the 17th century when Hezarfen Ahmet Çelebi attached wings to his arms and glided all the way to Üsküdar. The tower rises 135m (450 ft.) above sea level and stands 60m (200 ft.) high, with walls that are more than 3.5m (12 ft.) thick. From the summit of the tower, you can see the Golden Horn, the Bosphorus, and the Marmara Sea, a view infinitely more splendid in the evenings when the city takes on a spectacularly romantic glow. But frankly, you can get equally spectacular views from restaurant terraces all over the city, so although the tower is used as a restaurant and nightclub for a traditional **Turkish folkloric** show (✆ **0212/293-8180**), at 80€ a pop (they'll take 70€ if you pay in cash), I'd pass (and indeed I have).

Şişane. ✆ **0212/293-8180.** Historic gate daily 9am–1am (no access during the folklore show). Elevator to the top of Galata Tower free with reservation to Turkish show. Other times 10TL. Daily 9am–8pm. Tram: Karaköy; Bus: 28 from Upper and Lower Tünel, 28T from Beşiktaş.

Küçük Ayasofya Camii (Church of the Saints Sergius and Bacchus) ★ Finds Started in A.D. 527 by Justinian in the first year of his reign, this former church represents an important stage in the process of Byzantine architecture, particularly in the support of the dome atop an octagonal base. The church took its name from two martyred Roman soldiers later elevated to the status of patron saints; the edifice later assumed the name of "Little Ayasofya" due to its resemblance to the Ayasofya, which was started in A.D. 532. The church was converted into a mosque in the 16th century by the chief eunuch under Beyazıt II, who is buried in the garden. We know from the ancient historian Procopius that the interior of the church was covered in marble and mosaics; however, none of this remains. Opposite the entrance to the mosque is a *medrese* that encloses an uncharacteristically serene and leafy garden. An on-site eatery as well as teahouses share the arcade with a number of bookshops and **calligraphy boutiques,** offering genuine finds at some of the most competitive prices in the city.

Lower end of Küçük Ayasofya Cad. No phone. Tram: Sultanahmet.

Mosaic Museum In 1933 excavators discovered a mosaic pavement below what is now the Arasta Bazaar, identified as a section of **Peristyle Courtyard** (open court with porticos) of Constantine's Great Palace. As a decorative work of the palace, it is safe to assume (as scholars have) that the creation of the mosaic flooring employed the most gifted craftsmen of the era, collected from around the empire. Because of the exceptional nature of the mosaics, there are no comparable existing Byzantine-era mosaics from which to date these. The current assumption is that they were crafted during either the reign of Constantine or of Justinian.

Archaeologists estimate that the size of the courtyard was 1,872 sq. m (20,150 sq. ft.), requiring a total of 80,000,000 *tesserae* of lime, glass, and terra cotta. Typical of Roman mosaics, the subjects depicted on the panels are representative of an earlier, pre-Christian artistic era absent of religious motifs, showing instead hunting scenes and scenes from mythology.

Entrance at Torun Sok., across from the entrance to the Sultanahmet Sarayı Hotel; accessible through Arasta Bazaar to the southeast of the Blue Mosque. ✆ **0212/518-1205.** Admission 8TL. Tues–Sun 9am–6:30pm (4:30pm in winter). Tram: Sultanahmet.

St. Savior in Chora (Kariye Müzesi; formerly the Kariye Camii) ★★★ Much of what remained in the coffers of the Byzantine Empire was invested in the embellishment of this church, one of the finest preserved galleries of **Byzantine mosaics** as well as

Take a Break in the Retaining Wall of the Hippodrome

Arranged around a mushrooming fountain with choice seating tucked into the arches of the Sphendome, the **Havusba ı Çay Bahcesi,** or Pond Head Tea Garden (Nakilbent Sok.; ✆ **0212/638-8819**), couldn't get more atmospheric. Nestle in for fresh-squeezed fruit juice, tea, or light fare well into the evening hours, courtesy of Buhara 93 across the street. In the summer, the management mounts a tiny derviş show nightly.

a detailed account of early Christian history. The original church was built in the 4th century A.D. as part of a monastery complex outside the city walls (*chora zonton* means "in the country" in Greek), but the present structure dates to the 11th century. The interior restoration and decoration were the result of the patronage of Theodore Metochites, Grand Logothete of the Treasury during the reign of Andronicus II Paleologos, and date to the first quarter of the 14th century. His benevolence is depicted in a dedicatory panel in the inner narthex over the door to the nave, which shows Metochites presenting the Chora to Jesus.

When the church was converted into a mosque in the 16th century, the mosaics were plastered over. A 19th-century architect uncovered the mosaics but was ordered by the government to re-cover those in the section of the prayer hall. American archaeologists Whittemore and Underwood finally uncovered these masterpieces during World War II, and although the Chora became a museum in 1947, it is still often referred to as the Kariye Camii.

In total there are about 50 mosaic panels, but because some of them are only partially discernible, there seems to be disagreement on the exact count. Beginning in the exonarthex, the subjects of the mosaic panels fall into one of four themes, presented more or less in chronological order after the New Testament. Broadly, the themes relate to the cycle of the life of Christ and his miracles, stories of the life of Mary, scenes from the infancy of Christ, and stories of Christ's ministry. The panels not included in these themes are the devotional panels in the exonarthex and the narthex, and the three panels in the nave: *The Dormition of the Virgin, Christ,* and the *Virgin Hodegetria.*

The **Paracclesion** (burial section) is decorated with a series of masterful frescoes completed sometime after the completion of the mosaics and presumably executed by the same artist. The frescoes reflect the purpose of the burial chamber with scenes of Heaven and Hell, the Resurrection and the Life, and a stirring **Last Judgment** with a scroll representing infinity above a River of Fire, and a detail of Jesus saving Adam's and Eve's souls from the devil.

Camii Sok., Kariye Meydanı, Edirnekapı. ✆ **0212/631-9241.** www.choramuseum.com. Admission 15TL. Thurs–Tues 9:30am–6:30pm (until 4:30pm in winter). Bus: 90B from Beyazıt or 90 from Eminönü direct to the museum, or 91 from Eminönü to Edirnekapı.

Sphendome The ancient retaining wall of the closed end of the Hippodrome joins the Obelisks and Spina as the only remaining relics of the early Byzantine period. Today, this enduring infrastructure supports the buildings of Marmara Technical University. The structure is best viewed from below (access down the hill along Şifa Hamamı Sok. to Nakilbent Sok.); notice the 2m (6½ ft.)-high niches that used to contain statues (now

evocative seating for an outdoor tea garden and restaurant). The high arched section served as the stables.

Southeastern end of the Hippodrome. Tram: Sultanahmet.

Valens Aqueduct (Bozdoğan Kemeri) Now nothing more than a scenic overpass for cars traveling down Atatürk Bulvarı, the Valens Aqueduct or "Arcade of the Gray Falcon" was started by Constantine and completed in the 4th century A.D. by Valens. Justinian II had the second tier added; even Mehmet the Conqueror and Sinan had a hand in its restoration and enlargement. The aqueduct connects the third and fourth hills of Istanbul and had an original length of about .8km (½ mile). Water was transported under various rulers to the Byzantine palaces, city cisterns, and then to Topkapı Palace, and the aqueduct served in supplying water to the city for a total of 1,500 years.

Bridging Atatürk Bulv. btw. Aksaray and the Golden Horn. Bus: 36A, 36CV, 36D, 36V, 37C, 37Y, 38B, 39B, 39Y, 77A, or 86V.

Yerebatan Cistern (Yerebatan Sarnıcı) ★★ Classical music echoing off the still water and the seductive lighting make your descent into the "Sunken Palace" seem like a scene out of *Phantom of the Opera.* The only thing missing is a rowboat, which was an actual means of transportation before the boardwalk was installed in what is now essentially a great underground fishpond and stunning historical artifact. The cistern was first constructed by Constantine and enlarged to its present form by Justinian after the Nika Revolt using 336 marble columns recycled from the Hellenistic ruins in and around the Bosphorus. The water supply, routed from reservoirs around the Black Sea and transported via the Aqueduct of Valens, served as a backup for periods of drought or siege. It was left largely untouched by the Ottomans, who preferred running, not stagnant, water, and eventually used the source to water the Topkapı Gardens. The cistern was later left to collect silt and mud until it was cleaned by the municipality and opened to the public in 1987. The water is clean and aerated thanks to a supply of overgrown goldfish that are replaced every 4 years or so.

Follow the wooden catwalk and notice the "column of tears," a pillar etched with symbols resembling tears. (An identical pattern is visible on the columns scattered along the tramway near the Üniversite stop, where the old Byzantine palace was once located.) At the far end of the walkway are two **Medusa heads,** one inverted and the other on its side; according to mythology, placing her this way caused her to turn herself into stone. Another superstition is that turning her upside down neutralizes her powers. Possibly, the stones were just the right size as pedestals.

Yerebatan Cad. (diagonal from Ayasofya), Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/522-1259.** www.yerebatan.com. Admission 10TL. Daily 9am–5:30pm. Tram: Sultanahmet.

4 HISTORIC HAMAMS (TURKISH BATHS)

The number of *hamams* in Istanbul mushroomed in the 18th century when the realization hit that they were big business. Mahmut I had the Cağaloğlu Hamamı built to finance the construction of his library near the Ayasofya, but new constructions were limited later that century because the *hamams* were using up the city's resources of water and wood. Only about 20 *hamams* have survived.

Fun Facts A Punishment Fit for the Crime?

While coed baths are common in Turkey, under the Ottomans, the penalty imposed on a man found in the woman's section of a *hamam* was death.

The most visited *hamams* today are the palatial **Çemberlitaş Hamamı,** Vezirhan Cad. 8 (off Divanyolu at the Column of Constantine; ✆ **0212/522-7974;** www.cemberlitashamami.com.tr; 55TL for the traditional bath, perfunctory massage, and *kese,* a scrubbing using an abrasive mitt [they have a luxury service for 95TL that lasts about 45 minutes]; 35TL bath only; MasterCard, Visa; daily 6am–midnight with separate sections), which was based on a design by Sinan, and the 18th-century **Cağaloğlu Hamamı,** Yerebatan Cad. at Ankara Cad. (✆ **0212/522-2424;** www.cagalogluhamami.com.tr; 80TL bath and *kese;* 100TL if you opt for the "Oriental luxury" treatment; 40TL entry only; daily 7am–10pm for men, 8am–8pm for women), which allegedly saw the bare bottoms of Franz Liszt, Edward VIII, Kaiser Wilhelm, and Florence Nightingale, and even had a part as an extra in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom.*

A better value is the recently restored **Süleymaniye Hamamı** ★, Mimar Sinan Cad. 20 (✆ **0212/519-5569;** www.suleymaniyehamami.com; daily 10am–midnight), part of the Süleymaniye mosque complex and another architectural and social welfare wonder of Sinan and Süleyman the Magnificent. Pickup and drop-off from your hotel is included in the price of admission, which includes the massage and *kese* (35€ for treatment per person; call to see if your hotel is in their range). One caveat: This *hamam* is coed.

In Beyoğlu, the **Tarıhı Galatasaray Hamamı,** Sütterazı Sok. 24 (from Istiklal Cad. in front of the Galatasaray High School, it's the second street to the left of the gate; ✆ **0212/249-4242** the men's side; ✆ **0212/249-4342** the women's side; www.galatasarayhamami.com; 40TL admission plus 5TL if you want the massage and *kese;* daily 7am–10pm for men, 8am–8pm for women), was built by Beyazıt II in 1481 as part of the Galata Sarayı school complex. It's the least touristy of the historic *hamams* mentioned here (does John Travolta's recent visit support or belie this?), and indeed, sometimes locals working in the area will pop in for a quickie.

Probably the most spectacular *hamam* is the decommissioned **Haseki Sultan Hamamı,** in Sultanahmet Park. Built by Sinan in 1557 on a symmetrical plan that provided two separate sections of identical domed halls, the *hamam* was decommissioned when it was found that the elongated layout resulted in too much heat loss. For the past decade or so, it was used as a carpet exhibition center for the state-owned Dösim group of shops. Currently undergoing restoration, rumor has it that the Haseki Sultan Hamamı will be restored to its original function as a public bath.

The oldest and largest *hamam* in Istanbul is the **Tahtakale Hamamı,** dating to the second half of the 15th century. This splendid double bath managed to survive—only barely—the earthquake of 1894, the fire of 1911, and the indignity of serving as a storehouse for cheese in the 1980s. It has now been put to good use not as a bath, but as the **Istanbul Kahvehanesi** (Tahtakale Hamam Çarşısı, Uzun Çarşısı Cad., Eminönü; ✆ **0212/514-4042**), serving cups of the strong black Turkish brew in the shadow of marble arches and repurposed fountains.

Steam Heat: Taking the Hamam

In characteristic socially conscious fashion, the Selçuks were the ones to adopt the Roman and Byzantine tradition of public bathing and treat it like a public work. Lacking running water at home, society embraced the *hamam,* which evolved into not only a place to cleanse body and soul, but a social phenomenon as well. Even the accouterments of the *hamam* took on symbols of status: wooden clogs inlaid with mother-of-pearl, towels embroidered with gold thread, and so on. Men gathered to talk about politics, sports, and women, while the ladies kept an eagle eye out for suitable wives for their sons.

The utility of the *hamam* evolved and fell out of daily use, probably because the neighborhood ones have a reputation for being dirty, and the historic ones come with a hefty admission charge. As of late, though, views of the *hamam* have undergone a complete renaissance, not least of all owing to the arrival of über-deluxe *hamam* spas such as the ones in the Four Seasons the Bosphorus, the Çırağan Palace, and Hotel Les Ottomans. Istanbul's luxury *hamam* scene is a far cry from the perfunctory treatment received at one of the historically touristy *hamams.*

What to expect? The main entrance of a Turkish bath opens up to a ***camekan,*** a central courtyard lined with changing cubicles surrounding an ornamental marble fountain. Visitors are presented with the traditional *pestamal,* a checkered cloth worn like a sarong (up higher for women). Valuables are secured in a private locker, provided for each customer, although it's a good idea to leave the best of it at home.

The experience begins past the cooling section (and often the toilets), into the steam room, or ***hararet.*** For centuries architects worked to perfect the design of the *hararet:* a domed, octagonal (or square) room, revetted in marble, often with marvelous oculi to provide entry for sunlight, and with intricate basins at various intervals and a heated marble platform, known as the **naval stone** or *göbektaşı*, in the center. Often the *hamam* is covered with elaborately crafted and ornately designed tiles.

Many first-time visitors have questions about how much clothing to take off. In segregated *hamams* it's customary and acceptable to strip (this is a bath,

If you're looking for luxury and personal attention, more along the lines of a modern-day spa treatment, you'll want to visit a *hamam* at a hotel instead. My personal favorites are **Les Ottomans** (p. 91), **Çırağan Palace** (p. 161), the **Ritz-Carlton** (p. 81), and the **Sofa Hotel** (p. 189). (***Note:*** For any *hamam* treatment, a 10% tip is customary).

5 OTTOMAN MOSQUES, TOMBS & MONUMENTS

Beyazıt Mosque (Beyazıt Camii) Beyazıt II, son of the Conqueror, is remembered kindly by history as one of the more benevolent of sovereigns, and indeed, in Turkey, he

after all) or to wear a bikini bottom. While generally, the gender of *hamam* attendants in hotels and major tourist centers matches that of the client's, it is not uncommon for a neighborhood *hamam* to staff only men. Call ahead if you have any concerns.

The *hamam* ritual begins with you supine on the heated naval stone. Step one is the scrubbing using an abrasive mitt *(kese)* aimed at removing the outer layer of dead skin and other organic detritus. (Offer a tip to your attendant before the rubdown.) The actual bath is next; the substantial and slippery soap bubbles create the perfect canvas for the accompanying massage. This is primarily where you will notice the difference between a private *hamam* (where you are the only "client") and one of the more commercial ones. In the commercial ones (listed above, all of which I have nevertheless frequented repeatedly), don't be surprised if your massage feels more like a cursory pummeling. After all, how many clients complain? (Not me.) The private hotel *hamams* have more of a long-term stake and therefore provide high-quality service. The difference is like night and day.

The final act of the ritual is the rinsing (you may even get a relaxing facial massage), followed by a definitive tap on the shoulder followed by "You like?"—an indication that your session is over. At this point you are most likely dehydrated and sleepy, which is when the purpose of that **cold room** with the lounge chairs becomes evident. Refreshments are available and the price list is usually displayed nearby. (Refreshments are usually included in the price of a hotel *hamam*.) In the commercial *hamams* you can go back into the *hararet* as often as you like, whereas in a hotel *hamam* a session lasts 45 minutes to an hour.

Whether you opt for the $30 version or the $75 hotel service, definitely sign up for "the works" at least once in your life and you'll forever comprehend why it was indeed good to be the sultan.

has been elevated to a saint. The mosque and complex bearing his name is the oldest surviving imperial mosque in the city (its predecessor, the Fatih Camii, succumbed to an earthquake and was reconstructed in 1766). The complex was built between 1501 and 1506 using materials taken from Theodosius's Forum of Tauri, on which it is built.

Again, the architect of Beyazıt Camii looked to the Ayasofya, employing a central dome buttressed by semidomes and a long nave with double arcades, although the mosque is half the size of the church. The Beyazıt Mosque also borrows elements from the Fatih Mosque, imitating the system of buttressing and the use of great columns alongside the dome. Thanks to Sultan Beyazıt II's patronage, the Ottomans found a style of their own, which served as a bridge to later classical Ottoman architecture. The sultan,

Tips Etiquette for Entering the House of the Lord

Respect for places of worship does not only apply to mosques. The legacy of the Byzantine and Ottoman eras appears in dozens and dozens of churches and synagogues as well. These faiths are no less expectant of proper, respectful, and conservative behavior under their roofs. For women, exposed shoulders and thighs are a no-no in all three, and heads should be covered both in mosques, and for married women only, in synagogues. Men get a bit more latitude, but should also be respectful in their choice of attire when visiting a house of worship. For visits to the mosque, remember to take your shoes off outside the entrance and *before* stepping onto the carpets. Depending on the size of the mosque, you will either leave your shoes outside or carry them in with you (there are little wooden shelves at the back of the interior for storage during prayer/visitation). In general, visitors are told that mosques are closed to visitors during prayer time, but I have yet to be turned away and find this to be one of the more solemn and telling moments to experience. If you do enter during services, remain respectful and near the perimeter of the mosque, and refrain from wandering around.

who died in 1512, is buried in a simple tomb, decorated in mother-of-pearl and stained glass, at the back of the gardens.

Yeniçeriler Cad., across from the Beyazıt tram stop. No phone. Tram: Beyazıt; Bus: 36A, 36CV, 36D, 36V, 37C, 37Y, 38B, 39B, 39Y, 77A, or 86V.

Eyüp Sultan Mosque (Eyüp Sultan Camii) The holiest site in Istanbul as well as one of the most sacred places in the Islamic world, the Eyüp Sultan Mosque was erected by Mehmet the Conqueror over the tomb of Halid bin Zeyd Ebu Eyyûb (known as Eyüp Sultan), the standard-bearer for the Prophet Mohammed as well as the last survivor of his inner circle of trusted companions. It is popularly accepted that while serving as commander of the Arab forces during the siege of A.D. 668 to A.D. 669, Eyüp was killed and buried on the outskirts of the city. One of the conditions of peace after the Arab siege was that the tomb of Eyüp be preserved.

The burial site was "discovered" during Mehmet the Conqueror's siege on the city, although the tomb is mentioned in written accounts as early as the 12th century.

A little village of tombs mushroomed on the spot by those seeking Eyüp Sultan's intervention in the hereafter, and it's still considered a privilege to be buried in the nearby cemeteries. The Girding of the Sword ceremony was traditionally held here. In this Ottoman enthronement rite, Osman Gazi's sword was passed on, maintaining continuity within the dynasty as well as creating a connection with the Turks' early ideal of Holy War.

Eyüp is a popular spot animated by the small bazaar nearby, crowds relaxing by the spray of the fountains, and little boys in blue-and-white satin celebrating their impending circumcisions. Unfortunately, it's a natural magnet for beggars as well. The baroque mosque replaces the original that was destroyed in the earthquake of 1766, but the real attraction here is the ***türbe,*** a sacred burial site that draws masses of pilgrims waiting in line to stand in the presence of the contents of the solid silver sarcophagus or meditate in prayer. Dress appropriately if you're planning to go in: no shorts, and heads covered for women. The line moves quickly in spite of the bottleneck inside the tomb; take a few

Moments A Cafe near the Eyüp Sultan Mosque

If you've made it all the way to Eyüp to visit the mosque, take a short detour to **Pierre Loti,** Gümüşsuyu Balmumcu Sok. 1 (✆ **0212/581-2696**), a cafe of legend and a spectacular spot for serene views of the Golden Horn. The legend goes that French naval officer Julien Viaud fell in love with Aziyade, a married Turkish woman, during his first visit to Istanbul around 1876. The young woman would sneak out of her husband's harem when he was away for the chance to spend a few fleeting moments in the arms of her lover at his house in the hills of Eyüp. After an absence from Turkey of 10 years, Viaud returned to find Aziyade had died soon after his departure. Viaud gained fame during his lifetime, and his stories are romantic accounts much like the one of legend. This cafe, on the hill of Eyüp, was a favorite of his, and for reasons unknown, became known as Pierre Loti Kahvesi. Eyüp's historic cemetery is on the hill next to the cafe. The cafe is open daily 8am to midnight; no food or alcohol is served here; avoid weekends, when nary an empty table will be your reward for the ride up. A cable car from the shore of the Golden Horn makes the trip straight up to the cafe at the top of the hill a little bit easier than walking up, although you may want to walk down through the old Ottoman cemetery.

moments to sense the power of the site. On Fridays at noon there is an outdoor performance of the **Mehter Band** ★ in the large square outside the mosque, and on Sundays the plaza is filled with families parading around their little boys dressed like sultans (a pre-circumcision tradition).

Eyüp. Meydanı, off of Camii Kebir Cad. and north of the Golden Horn Bridge. No phone. Bus: 37C, 39, 39B, 39C, 39D, 39O, 39Y, or 48A; Cable car from the Golden Horn.

Fatih Mosque and C omplex (Fatih Camii ve Külliyesi) Fatih Sultan Mehmet II had his namesake built on the ruins of the Havariyun, or the Church of Holy Apostles, which served as the seat of Christianity after the conquest, from 1453 to 1456. At that time, the church was second only to the Ayasofya in importance and therefore served as the burial place of every emperor from Constantine I to Constantius VIII (from A.D. 337 to 1028!). Alexius III Angelius looted the graves to fill his imperial coffers; the graves were again looted during the Fourth Crusade. In addition to the commanding mosque, the eight *medreses* (schools) founded by the sultan are the only surviving sections of a complex that included a caravansary, a hospital, several *hamams,* kitchens, and a market, which combined to form a university that instructed up to 1,000 students at any given time. Wanting a monument more spectacular than that of Ayasofya, the sultan cut off the hands of the architect, Atık Sinan (not Süleyman's Sinan) when the Fatih Mosque failed to surpass the height of the church, despite its position atop the fourth of the seven hills of Istanbul. The tombs of Fatih Mehmet II and his wife (mother of Beyazıt II) are located outside of the *mihrab* wall.

Enter on Fevzipaşa Cad., Fatih. No phone. Bus: 28, 31E, 32, 336E, 336I, 36A, 36CV, 36D, 36KE, 36V, 37C, 37E, 37Y, 38B, 38E, 39B, 39Y, 86V, 87, 90, or 91O.

Hünkar Kasrı ★★ Adjacent to the Yeni Valide Camii (see below) is the Imperial Pavillion, until recently in a desperate state of neglect and closed to the public. But having ridden the wave of restorations preceding Istanbul as European Cultural Capital

Tips Catch the Ottoman Mehter Band Outdoors

That must-see **Ottoman Mehter Band** that I tout so much (p. 68) no longer requires that you head over to the Military Museum in the middle of your day. There's now a performance every Friday, an hour and a half prior to noon prayers, right in front of the Eyüp Sultan Mosque. After the music and a visit to the mosque complex, hop onto the brand-new **cable car** for the 2-minute ride up to the top of Pierre Loti Hill. In the summertime, you can catch the spectacle at the far end of the first courtyard of Topkapı Palace, under the Babüsselâm Gate (Gate of Salutation, or Middle Gate) at 11am on Wednesdays and outside Dolmabahçe Palace at 10am on Tuesdays.

2010, the Hünkar Kasrı has been restored to its original decorative glory. The interior is a dizzying canvas of Ottoman workmanship: 17th-century cobalt and crimson Iznik tile (there are more than 10,000 of them), stained glass, colored calligraphy on carved wood (a technique known as Edirnekâri), mother-of-pearl inlay, and gold leaf. The pavilion belongs to the cluster of imperial buildings that includes the Egyptian Spice Bazaar, the Yeni Valide Camii, a *medrese, hamam,* mausoleum, and garden, and was used by the imperial family as a resting place before or after prayers and on holy days. For convenience, the pavilion was connected to the Yeni Valide Camii by way of a long corridor spanning the street-level passageway that connects the square in front of the Yeni Cami with Bankacılar Sokak, allowing the Sultan to directly, and privately, enter the mosque. Entrance to the building is via a stone ramp accessed from Bankacılar Sokak called the *Tahtırevan yolu* or Palanquin Way, indicating the high station of those who entered.

Bankacılar Sokak 1, Sirkeci. Contact tourism office ✆ **0212/511-5888** in Sirkeci; ✆ 0212/518-1802 in Sultanahmet for hours and admission.

Yeni Valide Camii or Yeni Camii (The New Queen Mother's Mosque) Begun by Valide Safiye, mother of Mehmet III, in 1597, the foundations of this mosque were laid at the water's edge in a neighborhood slum whose inhabitants had to be paid to move out. Designed by the architect Da'ud Ağa, a pupil of Sinan, the Yeni Camii has become a defining feature of Istanbul's skyline.

The building of the mosque dragged on for over 40 years due to water seepage, funding problems, embezzlement, and the death of the sultan, which temporarily shut down operations completely. The mosque was completed by another queen mother, Valide Sultan Turhan Hattice, mother of Mehmet IV, who is buried in the valide sultan's tomb, or *türbe,* in the courtyard.

The mosque is part of a complex that included at one time a hospital, primary school, and public bath. The **Mısır Çarşısı,** or **Egyptian Spice Market,** was actually constructed as part of the complex. In the open space formed by the inner "L" of the Spice Market and the northeastern-facing side of the mosque are stalls selling garden and pet supplies, a busy and shaded tea garden, and some street vendors. At the far (northwestern) end of the mosque on the opposite corner is the *türbe,* housing, in addition to the Valide Sultan, the remains of sultans Mehmet IV, Mustafa II, Ahmet III, and Mahmut I.

Opposite the *türbe* is the house of the mosque's astronomer, or *muvakkithane,* from where the position of the sun would be monitored to establish the times of the five daily prayers. Just behind the *muvakkithane* is a ramp leading up to the entrance of the royal

loge, or private prayer room. The loge is best viewed from inside the mosque; enjoying a view of the sea, it was richly decorated by tiles, a dome, a vaulted antechamber, and a private toilet.

Egyptian Spice Bazaar, Eminönü. No phone. Tram: Eminönü.

Şehzade Külliyesi (Crown Prince Mosque Complex) ★ What was at the time considered a masterpiece of Ottoman architecture is now merely a footnote to Sinan's subsequent great works. In fact, Sinan was still an apprentice when he was ordered by Süleyman the Magnificent to build a monument to the memory of his beloved first-born son and intended heir, Şehzade (Prince) Mehmet, who died of smallpox in 1543 at the premature age of 21. The plan of the mosque is an important milestone in the evolution of his works, as it is a simple system of four semidomes supported by four pillars that has been both criticized for being harsh and praised as harmonic. The use of four elephantine pillars is repeated in the Blue Mosque. The layout of the complex, consisting of the mosque, a *medrese,* a refectory, a double guesthouse, a caravansaray, and tombs, follows no special plan, and indeed the primary school and public kitchens have been cut off from the rest of the complex by the main avenue. The prince's tomb is an octagonal masterpiece of arabesques, rare tiles, and stained glass housing a unique sarcophagus of wood lattice inlaid with ivory. The smaller octagonal tomb adjacent to that of the prince is that of Rüstem Paşa. For many years the Şehzade remained the largest building in Istanbul, but even before the mosque was completed, Süleyman had already ordered the construction of another, grander mosque as a monument to his reign.

Fun Facts Stolen Goods

Several of the precious Iznik-tile panels stolen from inside the Hünkar Kasrı in 2003 and 2004 were found on auction in London in 2007.

Şehzadebası Cad., Vefa. No phone. Tram: Laleli; Bus: 36A, 36CV, 36D, 36V, 37C, 37Y, 38B, 39B, 39Y, 77A, or 86V.

Sokullu Mehmet Paşa Camii This mosque is considered to be one of the "minor" works of Sinan, architect to the sultans. But there are several reasons why this mosque is anything but minor. First, it represents a transition in the process of Sinan's experimentation with space: the return to a hexagonal formula (from one where the dome is supported on an octagonal base), resulting in a softening of the transitions from one feature to another and thus of greater spatial homogeneity. Second, it's one of the rare instances where the interior of a mosque is revetted in decorative tile. The Iznik tile motifs featured on the squinches supporting the dome, on the frieze below the galleries, and on the *qibla* (wall panel facing Mecca), depict chrysanthemums, carnations, and cornflowers. The calligraphic tiles proclaim the 99 Attributes of God. Third, and unique in Turkey, is the placement of three tiny black stones said to be from the Kaa'ba in Mecca embedded above the main portal, the *mihrab,* and the *mimbar.*

Şehit Çeşmesi Sok., Sultanahmet. No phone. Tram: Sultanahmet or Çemberlitaş.

Süleymaniye Mosque and C omplex (Süleymaniye Camii ve Külliyesi) ★★
Perched on one of the seven hills of Istanbul and dominating the skyline, this complex is considered to be Sinan's masterpiece as much as the grand monument to Süleyman's reign. The complex covers an area of nearly 6 hectares (15 acres), and it is here where Sinan achieves his goal of outdoing the dome of the Ayasofya. Here, the dome reaches a

Tips A Sweet Shop near Galata

You can really work up an appetite wandering around the spice bazaar. Across the Galata Bridge at the Karaköy seaport is the humble (and famous) **Güllüoğlu** (✆ **0212/244-4567**) sweet shop, where you'll find the best *börek*—a feathery and delicious cheese- or meat-filled pastry. They also keep their glass cases full of baklava.

height of 49m (159 ft.) spanning a diameter of 27m (89 ft.; compared to the Ayasofya's 56m/184-ft.-high dome and 34m/112 ft. diameter). The mosque was completed in 7 years (1550–57); it is said that after the foundation was laid, Sinan stopped work completely for 3 years to ensure that the foundation had settled to his satisfaction.

Sinan returned to the Byzantine basilica model for the construction of the mosque with an eye to the Ayasofya. Critics have contended that this was an unsuccessful attempt to surpass the engineering feats of the church, but more than likely this was a conscious move on the part of the sultan to create continuity and a symbolic connection with the city's past. As the Ayasofya was analogous to the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, so was the Süleymaniye, as the name Süleyman is the Islamic version of Solomon. After the project was completed, Sinan recounts in his "biography of the Construction," how the sultan humbly handed the keys over to him and asked him to be the one to unlock the doors, acknowledging that the masterpiece was as much the architect's as his own.

The complex includes five schools, one *imaret* (kitchens and mess hall, now a restaurant for groups), a caravansary with stables, a hospital, *hamams,* and a cemetery. The construction of the mosque and complex mobilized the entire city, employing as many as 3,000 workers at any given time, and the 165 ledgers recording the expenses incurred in the building of the mosque are still around to prove it. The great sultan is buried in an elaborate tomb on the grounds, as is his wife Hürrem Sultan (Roxelana). In the courtyard outside the entry to the cemetery and tombs are a pair of slanted marble benches used as a stand for the sarcophagi before burial.

Süleyman carried the tradition of symbolism to his grave with a system of layered domes copied from the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. In the garden house next to the complex is the **tomb of Sinan;** the garden house is where he spent the last years of his life. The tomb was designed by the master architect himself and is inspiring in its modesty and simplicity.

Vefa. From the Grand Bazaar, cross the University park and follow the domes. ✆ **0212/522-0298.** Tram: Beyazıt.

6 PALACES OF THE SULTANS

While the power and prestige of a new and modern Europe were increasing, the Ottoman Empire was on its last leg. To create an image of prosperity and modernization, Sultan Abdülmecid had the Dolmabahçe Palace constructed, and abandoned Topkapı Palace along with what he considered to be the symbol of an old order. With the official and Europeanized residence of the Ottoman Empire now on the northern shores of the Bosphorus, it wasn't long before members of the court and government officials began to

build mansions in the area. More palaces sprang up, and the official shifting of power from south of the Golden Horn to the waterfront of Beşiktaş was complete. If the royal palaces fail to convince you of the Ottoman Empire's extravagance during its final economic decline, they will surely convince you of its opulence.

Beylerbeyi Palace (Beylerbeyi Sarayı) Beylerbeyi, built under Sultan Abdülaziz by another member of the talented Balyan family of architects in the European style of Dolmabahçe, was the second palace to be built on the Bosphorus and served as a summer residence and guest quarters for *bey* (dignitaries) during their visits to the city. The shah of Iran and the king of Montenegro were guests here as well as the French Empress Eugénie, who admired the palace so much that she had the design of the windows copied on the Tuilleries Palace in Paris. It's a bit dusty, and not as grand as Dolmabahçe, but worth a visit if you're on the Asian side and looking for a diversion.

Beylerbeyi, which replaced Abdülmecid's previous palace, was completed in 1865 on a less extravagant scale than the one on the European shores, employing only 5,000 men to build it. Although less grand and weathered by time, Beylerbeyi has some features worthy of a visit, not least of all the terraced garden of magnolias at the base of the Bosphorus Bridge. The monumental staircase to this marble palace is fronted by a pool and fountain which served as much to cool the air as to look pretty, and the floors are covered with reed mats from Egypt that act as insulation against dampness. The grounds contain sumptuous pavilions and kiosks, including the Stable Pavilion, where the imperial stud was kept.

Ironically, Abdülhamid II spent the last 6 years of his life admiring Dolmabahçe from the other side of the Bosphorus, having been deposed and kept under house arrest here until his death in 1918.

Take a ferry to Üsküdar and then a bus to Çayırbaşı. ✆ **0216/321-9320.** www.millisaraylar.gov.tr. Entrance/tour 5TL. Daily 9am–5pm. Ferry: from Eminönü, ferry to Çengelköy or Üsküdar, and then bus 14M, 15, 15B, 15C, 15ÇK, 15F, 15H, 15KÇ, 15M, 15N, 15P, 15R, 15S, 15ŞN, 15U, or 15Y.

Çırağan Palace From the first wooden summer mansion built on the spot in the 16th century to the grand waterfront palace that stands today, the Çırağan Palace was torn down and rebuilt no less than five times. Now a palace of sumptuous suites that make up part of the adjacent **Hotel Kempinski Istanbul** (p. 90), the palace takes its name from the hundreds of torches that lined these former royal gardens during the festivals of the Tulip Period in the latter part of the 18th century.

The foundations were laid in 1855 when Sultan Abdülaziz ordered the construction of a grand palace to be built as a monument to his reign. The architect, Nigogos Balyan, ventured as far as Spain and North Africa to find models in the Arab style called for by the sultan. The fickle Abdülaziz moved out after only a few months, condemning the palace as too damp to live in.

Fun Facts Bridge over Troubled Water

In 1501 Sultan Beyazıt II invited Leonardo da Vinci to construct a bridge across the Golden Horn at the mouth of the Bosphorus—a technical feat deemed impossible until then. The master submitted a plan so revolutionary that it was deemed unbuildable. (Three years later, the sultan made the same proposal to Michelangelo, but Pope Julius II refused to let him go, and he politely declined.)

Murad V (who in 1876 deposed his uncle Abdülaziz), Abdülhamid II, and Mehmed V were all born in the palace. Murad V spent the final 27 years of his life imprisoned here, while his brother (who deposed him shortly after Murad V bumped his uncle) kept a watchful eye on him from the Yıldız Palace next door.

After Murad V's death, the Parliament took over the building but convened here for only 2 months because of a fire in the central heating vents that spread and reduced the palace to a stone shell in under 5 hours. (Some of the original doors were given as gifts by Abdülaziz to Kaiser Wilhelm and can now be seen in the Berlin Museum.) In 1946 the Parliament handed the property over to the Municipality, which for the next 40 years used it as a town dump as well as a soccer field. In 1986 the Kempinski Hotel Group saved the shell from yet another demise, using the palace as a showcase of suites for its luxury hotel next door. Since its opening, the Çırağan has laundered the pillowcases of princes, kings, presidents, and rock stars, carrying on at least a modern version of a royal legacy of the original.

In 2007, the hotel focused its energies on rescuing the palace from its faded glory and restoring it to its once and future grandeur. The space is friendlier too: Nonguests of the hotel are encouraged to pay a visit to this living museum by way of the ground-floor art gallery (bonus: for visits to the gallery, parking is free), by enjoying a recital of the chamber orchestra (p. 168), or dining at their Ottoman restaurant, **Tuğra** (p. 119). The grounds are spread along 390m (1,300 ft.) of coastline and can be visited only as part of a stop off at the main hotel, preferably from the seaside garden terrace, which provides ample views of the Palace Sea Gate, the Palace Garden Gate, and the main building itself.

Çırağan Cad., Beşiktaş. ✆ **0212/258-3377.** www.ciraganpalacesuites.com. Free admission. Hotel common areas open 24 hr.; bar and restaurant have individual hours. Bus: 22, 22RE, 25E, 30D, 40, 40T, 42, 57UL, DT1, DT2, or U1.

Dolmabahçe Palace (Dolmabahçe Sarayı) ★ Extending for almost .8km (½ mile) on a tract of landfill on the shores of the Bosphorus is Dolmabahçe Palace (appropriately translated as "filled garden"), an imperial structure that for the first time looked to Western models rather than to the more traditional Ottoman style of building. The architect of Dolmabahçe was Garabet Balyan, master of European forms and styles amid a long line of Balyan architects.

At a time of economic reform when the empire was still known as "The Sick Man of Europe," Sultan Abdülmecid II sank millions into a palace that would give the illusion of prosperity and progressiveness. The old wooden Beşiktaş Palace was torn down to make room for a more permanent structure, and the sultan spared no expense in creating a house to rival the most opulent palaces of France. While many of his subjects were living without the basics, the sultan was financing the most cutting-edge techniques, tastefully waiting until the end of the Crimean War to move in, even though the palace was completed much earlier than that.

The result is a sumptuous creation consisting of 285 rooms, four grand salons, six galleries, five main staircases, six *hamams* (of which the main one is pure alabaster), and 43 toilets. Fourteen tons of gold and 6 tons of silver were used to build the palace. The extensive use of glass, especially in the Camlı Köşk conservatory, provides a gallery of virtually every known application of glass technology of the day. The palace is a glittering collection of Baccarat, Bohemian, and English crystal as well as Venetian glass, which was used in the construction of walls, roofs, banisters, and even a crystal piano. The chandelier in the Throne Room is the largest one in Europe at 4.5 tons, a bulk that created an engineering challenge during installation but that has withstood repeated earthquake

Swift Boated Through the Symplegades

According to mythology, Jason and his trusted band of Argonauts had one more hurdle to overcome before claiming the Golden Fleece for their own. At one point in their journey, the Argonauts had been warned by the blind seer, Phineus, that at the mouth of the Symplegades, described as a boiling caldron of black waves, was a sea of clashing rocks threatening to crush all who dared to enter. Indeed, the currents of the Bosphorus are so unforgivable that many a tanker has been grounded on the banks of Istanbul's straits.

According to lore, the first to navigate the treacherous waterway successfully was Jason and his mythical Argonauts (*argo* meaning "swift" in Greek) on their quest for the Golden Fleece. But Phineus's prophecy revealed how Jason and his crew could pass the smashing, grinding rocks called the Symplegades alive. Phineus told Jason to simply release a dove into the entrance to the straits and, as the rocks were reopening, to literally row for their lives. The Argonauts did as they were told, and with merely the loss of some dovetail feathers and the stern ornament, they managed to navigate the deathtrap alive. At that moment, the rocks froze in place and the Bosphorus was tamed forever (except for a few grounded oil tankers).

tests. The extravagant collection of *objets d'art* represents just a small percentage of items presented to the occupants of the palace over the years, and much of the collection is stored in the basement awaiting restoration.

Tours to the palace and harem accommodate 1,500 visitors per day per section, a stream of gaping onlookers shod in blue plastic hospital booties distributed at the entry to the palace to ensure that the carpets stay clean. Tours leave every 15 minutes and last 1 hour for the Selâmlik and around 45 minutes for the Harem. If you're short on time, choose the Selâmlik. ***Important Note:*** As of July 2009, advance reservations are required for visits to the palace and all sections (available via phone or website).

Dolmabahçe Cad., Beşiktaş. ✆ **0212/236-9000.** www.dolmabahce.gov.tr. Admission and guided tour to the Selâmlik (Sultan's Quarters) and Harem 20TL. Crystal Pavilion 20TL. Clock Tower Museum 20TL. (Additional charge for introduction of camera or camcorder 20TL each.) Tues–Wed and Fri–Sun 9am–5pm (last tour leaves at 3pm). Tram: Kabataş; Funicular: Kabataş; Bus: 22, 22E, 22RE, 25E, 26, 26A, 26B, 27SE, 28, 28T, 29C, 29D, 30D, 325YK1, 41E, 43R, 46K, 52, 58A, 58N, 58S, 58UL, 62, 63, or 70KE.

Yıldız Palace and Park (Yıldız Sarayı ve Parkı) Yıldız was one of the last residences of the Ottoman sultans, established by Selim III for his mother at the end of the 18th century. Over the years, the grounds sprouted a small colony of satellite buildings and kiosks, each one built by a different master. The result is a collection of different architectural styles sparsely scattered around the expansive grounds of Yıldız Park. In 1877, after two coup attempts, Abdülhamid II moved his residence up the hill to the more secure and secluded Yıldız from Dolmabahçe. He quickly set about opening the palace grounds to the Royal Garden, a small grove that was connected to the Cırağan Palace by a marble and stone bridge over the main road. He ordered the landscaping of the property, requesting rare flowers, plants, and trees from all over the world and having them set around fountains and pools to create a magical setting for the tulip festivities

popular at the time. Today the collection of kiosks and pavilions spot the hillside landscape overlooking the Bosphorus, and the park has become a popular weekend getaway for city folk in pursuit of green surroundings. The wooded nooks and crannies also provide cover for what has infamously become known as (at least by me) lovers' lane: The park provides an unexpected and paradoxical picture of a conservative Islamic makeout session.

Probably the most beautiful structure on the property is the Şale Köşkü, a wood and masonry house (or chalet), with two additional wings constructed to accommodate two separate state visits by Wilhelm II, the Emperor of Germany. Later, the house was used by other foreign dignitaries, including Charles de Gaulle. The Şale Köşkü is one of the few buildings offering guided tours to the public, which leave as often (or as infrequently) as necessary, as the guides are loathe to walk singles through the old and empty hallways. Although Yıldız Palace is in need of some TLC (a new coat of paint, a good dusting, and maybe some carpet cleaner), there are a couple of noteworthy highlights. Probably the most impressive of the interior private spaces is the Grand Ceremonial Hall, once lit by three enormous French crystal chandeliers and six towering red-tinted Bohemian crystal floor lamps. A single, custom-made Hereke carpet covers an area of 406 sq. m (4,370 sq. ft.) and weighs a total of 7,500 kilograms (16,535 lb.). Also worth looking out for are the stunning pieces of handiwork that are the numerous china and porcelain floor-to-ceiling wood-burning stoves, and a dining set hand carved and inlaid with mother-of-pearl by Abdülhamid himself. Abdülhamid was passionate over his hobby of woodworking and had a carpentry workshop built close to the palace.

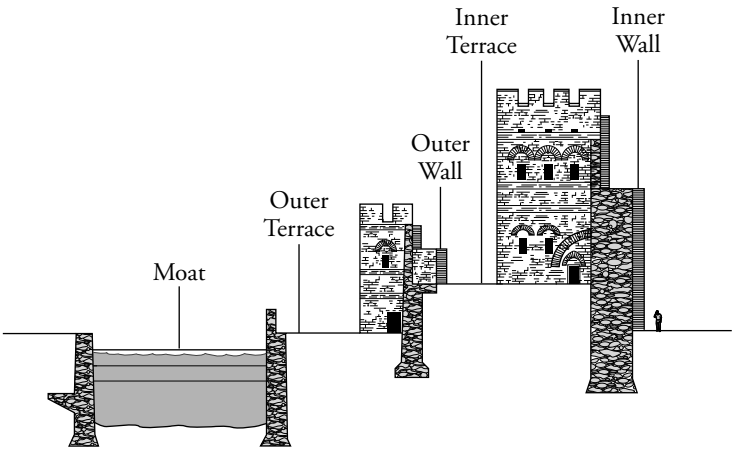
The Malta Köşkü, perched atop a steep hill, is where Murad V and his mother, as well as Midhat Paşa were imprisoned, the latter being tortured in the basement of the nearby Çadır Köşkü. When it wasn't serving as a penitentiary, the Malta Köşkü hosted state receptions. It is now a restaurant with trellised terrace overlooking the park toward the Bosphorus (see **Malta Köşkü,** p. 119).

If you're arriving by taxi, have the driver drop you off at the Şale Köşkü or the Malta Köşkü to save yourself the long hike uphill through the park.

Yıldız Park (entrance via Barbaros Bulv., Beşiktaş, or opposite the Çırağan Palace). ✆ **212/259-8977.** www.millisaraylar.gov.tr**.** Admission 5TL. Tues–Wed and Fri–Sun 10am–5pm in winter, 8:30am–5pm in summer. Bus: 22, 22RE, 25E, 30D, 40, 40T, 42, 57UL, DT1, DT2, or U1.

7 ONE IF BY LAND; TWO IF BY SEA: CONSTANTINOPLE'S DEFENSIVE WALLS

Even before the arrival of the great Roman emperors, the city on the hill (then called Megara) was a target for attack. Persian King Darius I took the city in 512 B.C.; then in 478 B.C., the Athenians squeezed out the Persians. Alexander the Great reinforced the city's Hellenistic bend, until in 146 B.C. the city came under Roman domination. For the next 350 years, the city basked in the glow of Pax Romana, notwithstanding Septimus Severus's massacre and destruction of the city when, having proclaimed himself emperor, he was met with resistance by the citizens loyal to his opponent, Pescennius Niger. When Severus rebuilt the city, he expanded the original boundaries to those enclosed by a defensive wall running roughly north to south from the Galata Bridge around the Hippodrome to the Marmara Sea. Constantine's walls again enlarged the city, forming a ceinture that expanded the city out into the middle of today's Fatih district. Nothing of either the Severus or Constantine walls survive.



Cross section of the Theodosian Land walls

Marmara Sea Walls While not as impressive a feat as the Theodosian defenses, the Sea Walls, originally built by order of Constantine and extended by Theodosius, are worth a mention. Sadly, there's very little left of the original section along the southern coastal road, because in 1870, railway engineers simply knocked it down to make way for the commuter train. So walls that endured 1,500 years of sieges, earthquakes, and even tsunamis fell to the onward march of urban "improvement."

The crumbling (albeit highly photogenic) decay of the sea walls greets you as you enter the Old City along the coastal road from the airport. The walls are predominantly to your left, leaving you to imagine the waves of the Marmara Sea lapping up over the road you're driving in on. Portions of the wall prop up houses constructed on the hill, and if you know what you're looking for, you can spot a handful of crumbling palatial arches remaining from the grand Bucoleon Palace. The wall was punctuated by eight gates designed to allow ships entry into the inner harbors. The Porta de Condoskali, or the Shallow Harbor Gate, now provides land access to the appropriately named neighborhood of **Kumkapı** (Sand Gate), now a lively area of fish restaurants recalling (barely) the fishermen's harbor that it once was. The **Ahırkapı,** or Stable Gate, served as the imperial port, but fell into disuse with the construction of the Bucoleon Palace to the west.

The best approach is either from the comfort of a car or on foot to 1 of the 2 gates mentioned above. It's also possible to walk along the walls all the way from Sirkeci around Sarayburnu to the southern face of Sultanahmet, but in spite of the views of the Marmara Sea, the traffic flow is too heavy and exhaust fumes too thick to make this a comfortable choice. A good compromise is to exit on foot at either Aksakal Cad. (east of the Küçük Ayasofya Camii) or Ahırkapı and reenter the city via the other. You won't want to try this in the height of summer, as the sun's rays are just too strong.

The Theodosian Walls ★★ By the time Theodosius II arrived on the throne in A.D. 408, the city of Constantinople was bursting at the seams. As Septimus Severus and Constantine had done before him, Theodosius set about fortifying and enlarging the city, and the alternately towering and crumbling red brick and limestone monoliths you see running north from Yedikule (you'll see it as you arrive into the city) all the way to Ayvansaray and the Golden Horn are what remain of Theodosius's Land Walls. Twenty-five

years after their construction between A.D. 412 and A.D. 422, the walls all but collapsed in an earthquake, and with the Huns advancing from the east, the politically polarized factions of the city set aside their grievances and in a period of 2 months, not only fortified the wall, but built another exterior wall plus a moat. (Constantinople nevertheless wound up paying Atilla the Hun protection money for 10 years after his attack.) Extensions to the wall, which under Theodosius ended at Blachernae, were added later by subsequent emperors. This latter section, from Ayvansaray down to the Golden Horn, was the weak link in the chain, and not surprisingly, the point at which Mehmet the Conqueror's army breached the city.

All together, the system of land defenses represents an impressive period in military architecture. The original, Theodosian wall consisted of a main (inner) wall 5m (16 ft.) thick and 11 to 14m (36–46 ft.) high, punctuated by 96 towers from 18 to 20m (59–66 ft.) in height. The refortification added an outer, crenelated wall reinforced with 92 towers placed at intervals of 50 to 70 or so meters (164–230 ft.), set in alternating position with the towers of the inner wall. Between the inner and outer wall was an inner terrace embankment (called a *peribolos*). Another wider embankment separated the outer wall from the moat, creating a vulnerable open space for those (un)lucky enough to get that far. The moat was the first line of defense, presenting invading armies with a formidable obstacle 20m (66 ft.) wide and 10m (33 ft.) deep. All told (including the additional sections north of Blachernae), the total length of the land walls is 6,670m (4 miles). Entrance and exit into and out of the city was via monumental gates constructed of stone, marble, and even, in the case of the Golden Gate at Yedikule, of gold. One of the most important gates of both the Byzantine and Ottoman periods was **Edirnekapı,** or the gate leading to Edirne. Edirnekapı, which is part of the original Theodosian wall, provided access to the main thoroughfare into the city center. Byzantine emperors used this gate when leaving for and returning from their campaigns abroad, and Fatih Mehmet (aka "the Conqueror") made his victorious entrance here. Later Ottoman sultans, after the official inauguration ceremonies at Eyüp, followed in Mehmet's footsteps and also entered via this gate.

Because of the derelict state of much of the structure and because there are no lights at night, the best approach to visiting the land walls is either to walk along them beginning at Edirnekapı (see chapter 8, "Istanbul Strolls") or view them up close and personal at Yedikule, where you can scramble to the top of the ramparts and get a good overview of the entire system heading north (see below).

Yedikule (Seven Towers Fortress) ★ Kids About a quarter of a mile inland from the Marmara Sea along the land walls is the Golden Gate entrance to the Byzantine city, a triumphal arch built by Theodosius. The arch predates the construction of the famed Theodosian walls and was used as a ceremonial entrance and exit to the city still for the most part confined to the boundaries set by Constantine's earlier defensive walls. From here, the main road, or "Mese," led directly through the center of the city, to the Milion Stone and Ayasofya. Theodosius later incorporated the gate into the construction of his defensive walls. Nearly a thousand years (and several earthquakes later) in 1457, Mehmet the Conqueror took advantage of the two towers flanking the Golden Gate, added an additional five towers, and enclosed them within a new defensive fortress. But the fort was never called to battle and served instead as the imperial treasury and a political prison for the likes of Mahmut Paşa, the Conqueror's Grand Vizier, and the deposed Mamluk caliph. Some unsavory incidents happened here too: When Sultan Osman II tried to reform the Janissaries in 1622, he was thrown in prison and then killed, and his head was tossed into what is now known as the "bloody well" in the center of the garden. Inside

the Zindan Kulesi (Inscription Tower), some of the scrapings etched into the stone by the prisoners are still visible. The wooden scaffolding is what remains of the prisoners' cells. Steep and narrow stone stairways provide access to the top of the battlements, where you can breathe deeply the salty sea air and contemplate some of the finest views of the city. The stairway on the eastern curtain wall (to the right of the entrance) has one lone banister; ascend and descend with care.

Imrahor Mah., Kule Meydanı 4, Yedikule/Fatih. ✆ **0212/584-4012.** Admission 5TL. Thurs–Tues 9:30am–4:30pm. Bus: 80 or 81 from Eminönü; 80T from Taksim.

8 ISTANBUL'S CONTEMPORARY ART SCENE

Istanbul's **Biennial** (p. 229) may have put the city on the art-world map in 1987, but the city's fast-paced Europeanization and naturally creative and innovative vigor has captured international attention otherwise. If your trip to Istanbul fails to coincide with the installation of this biennial citywide celebration of art, not to worry, as these days, plenty of creative juices flow during in-between years, displayed in unique and sometimes historic environments and as part of noteworthy private collections.

The major talk of the town is the new, old **SantralIstanbul** ★★, Eski Silahtarağa Elektrik Santralı, Silahtar Mah., Kazım Karabekir Cad. 1, Silahtar (✆ **0212/444-0428;** www.santralistanbul.org; free admission to the Museum of Energy; admission to current exhibitions 7TL), the recently restored and repurposed Ottoman-era Silahtarağa electric power plant. The industrial space, which also houses, appropriately, the Museum of Energy, is a fun and interactive educational tour through the history of power. The SantralIstanbul complex takes up 12 hectares (29 acres) of space on the Bilgi University campus on the northern shore of the Golden Horn. There are concert halls, a public library (in two of the former boiler rooms), an amphitheater, and living space for visiting artists. SantralIstanbul is open Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 8pm. A free shuttle departs from in front of the Atatürk Cultural Center in Taksim every half-hour between 8:30am and 9pm.

Another space that has made a splash in Istanbul is **Antrepo No. 3** ★★, Antrepo No. 3, Karaköy (✆ **0212/334-7300;** www.antrepo4.com; free admission), one of a cluster of four Customs warehouses (among which is the Istanbul Museum of Modern Art next door, formerly known as Antrepo No. 4; see below) lining the waterfront of the Bosphorus at Tophane. Designed as a warren of alternatively unexpected, chaotic, noisy, and thought-provoking exhibitions and installments, Antrepo intends to conceptually dissolve the barriers that separate art from urban life. The gallery is open Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 7pm when installations are on-site.

The cultural face of Garanti Bank, **Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center** ★, Istiklal Cad. 115A, Beyoğlu (✆ **0212/293-2361;** http://platformgaranti.blogspot.com; Tues–Sat 10am–6pm; free admission), has been one of Istanbul's most important art spaces since it arrived on the art scene in 2001. At the helm is Vasif Kortun, curator of past Istanbul Biennials, who has created an interactive space that includes the most comprehensive library of art publications in the city. In addition to showing contemporary exhibitions featuring art from Turkey and abroad, Platform acts as a national, regional, and international cultural portal, with residency programs available for artists from countries where artistic expression remains relatively untapped.

Galerist ★, Istiklal Cad., Mısır Apt. 163/4, Beyoğlu (✆ **0212/244-8230;** www.galerist.com.tr; free admission), is another one of Istanbul's and Turkey's more influential artistic spaces. Turkey's leading artists are showcased in this gallery, while one of Galerist's objectives is to expose the international artistic community to Turkish contemporary art through exhibitions abroad. Galerist is open Tuesday to Sunday, 11am to 7pm.

Since its founding in Ankara in 1984, **Galeri Nev,** Istiklal Cad. 163/18 in the Mısır Apt. 5th Floor (✆ **0212/252-1525**), and Maçka Cad. 33, Maçka (✆ **0212/231-6763;** www.galerinevistanbul.com; free admission), expanded to a second space in Istanbul and has mounted more than 300 exhibitions. The founding partners, architects by trade, concentrated the earliest exhibitions on Turkey's first modernists. The gallery has also hosted exhibitions of European modernists such as Bonnard, Dalí, and Picasso. Nev has a private collection of original prints, more than a hundred limited-edition reproductions, and 93 volumes of art books and catalogs. The Istanbul location is open Tuesday to Saturday, 11am to 6:30pm.

Also leading the charge to elevate the profile of progressive art in Turkey is the not-for-profit **Proje4L/Elgiz Çağdaş Sanat Müzesi,** Meydan Sok. Beybi Giz Plaza B Blok, Gültepe (metro to Levent; ✆ **0212/281-5150;** www.proje4L.org; free admission). In addition to housing the private collections of its founders Sevda and Can Elgiz—representing a range of mediums by both local and international artists—the museum organizes lectures and seminars and welcomes guest artists. The museum is open Wednesday to Friday, 10am to 5pm, and Saturday 10am to 4pm, Tuesday by appointment.

With all of this contemporary rebound to the antiquity of Istanbul, **Gallery Apel,** Hayriye Cad. 7, Galatasaray (✆ **0212/292-7236;** www.galleryapel.com; free admission), offers some refreshing middle ground by featuring works created using traditional materials like felt, ceramic, wood, and glass. Exhibitions are constantly changing and feature modern sculptures, prints, and even full-size architectural mock-ups. The gallery is open Tuesday to Sunday, 11:30am to 6:30pm.

There's certainly something to be said for viewing contemporary art in the palatially historic ground floor of the Palace Section of the **Çırağan Palace Hotel,** Çırağan Cad. 32, Beşiktaş (✆ **0212/326-4646;** www.kempinski-istanbul.com). The gallery (entrance through parking lot) features a different contemporary artist every 6 weeks. Entry is free and access to the gallery is round-the-clock. If you plan to go on the last Saturday of the month, the hotel also hosts a **chamber orchestra** in one of the rooms (11am–1pm; reservations required; free admission).

As major patrons of Turkish art in general, the banks along Voyvoda Caddesi, the street also known as Bankalar Caddesi in Karaköy (base of the Galata hill) result in a nice density of galleries. Keep your eyes open for banners and don't be shy about bypassing the security guard. (The word "*sanat*" for art, or "*galerie*" should help).

For additional information on current installations, log on to **www.mymerhaba.com** or pick up a copy of *Time Out Istanbul.* If you'll be traveling during the Biennial, the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Art (www.iksv.org) is the official site for the event.

Istanbul Museum of Modern Art ★ In a city of ancient empires, in a country whose political and economic supremacy is but a distant memory, Turkey, and in particular Istanbul, is carving itself a new niche. Only this time, it's looking forward, not back. The Istanbul Modern, opened in December 2004, occupies a crisp, utilitarian, and highly functional 7,990 sq. m (86,000 sq. ft.) in a former Customs warehouse just outside the cruise-ship docks. The collection of paintings, portraits, sculptures, and photographs in

the permanent collection tell us, in some sense, what was going on in the minds of the Turks in the 20th century. Some pieces simply make you tilt your head in wonder. The museum also serves as a sort of cultural center, with video programs, films, and a multimedia research library. The on-site restaurant has views of Topkapı Palace.

Meclis-I Mebusan Cad., Liman Işletmeleri Sahası, Antrepo 4, Karaköy. ✆ **0212/334-7300.** www.istanbulmodern.org. Admission 7TL, free for children under 12, free on Thurs. Tues–Sun 10am–6pm (Thurs until 8pm). Tram: Tophane.

9 EMINÖNÜ

SULTANAHMET

Binbirdirek Sarnıçı (Moments) The name means "Cistern of 1,001 Columns"—in spite of the actual presence of only 224. The cistern is thought to have been built by Philoxenus, a Roman senator and companion of Constantine the Great, as part of the Lavsus Palace. It is the oldest cistern in the city, and at 3,610 sq. m (38,858 sq. ft.), is the second-largest covered cistern (Yerebatan is the largest). The cistern was later used as a warehouse for the manufacture of silk yarn, but was then abandoned to the ignoble fate of garbage dump. As part of the process of recovery, 7,000 truckloads of detritus had to be removed. The current holders of the concession take advantage of the extremely atmospheric ambience as a background for a bar/restaurant, an amazing venue for weddings and other events, and a sometimes art gallery.

Binbirdirek Mah., Imran Öktan Sok. 4 (opposite the Post Office), Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/518-1001.** www.binbirdirek.com. Admission 7TL. Daily 9am–9pm. Tram: Sultanahmet.

Bucoleon Palace Imagine the lapping of the Marmara Sea onto the base of the palace ramparts, and visualize a continuous arcade of columned windows above a stepped portal flanked by twin lions allowing access to the palace by sea. These were the features of the Bucoleon Palace, the main living quarters of the Great Palace from the 9th to 11th centuries A.D., when the imperial family moved to Blachernae above the Golden Horn. The Bucoleon Palace was mostly in ruins, and whatever remained was regrettably demolished to make way for the commuter railway. All that's left today is a bleak wall of arched windows, topped by a handful of *gececondus* (unpermitted shanties that go up at night when no one is looking) visible from the sea-facing side of Sultanahmet just outside of the entrance to Aksakal Caddesi. Those lions, by the way, are now in the Istanbul Archaeology Museum.

Kennedy Cad., Sultanahmet (Aksakal Cad. intersects with Küçük Ayasofya Cad. near the Küçük Ayasofya Camii). Tram: Sultanahmet or Çemberlitaş.

Caferağa Medresesi Built in 1559 by Sinan on the order of one of the eunuchs to the harem, this *medrese* hardly ever makes the guidebooks. It's actually one of those rare "living historical places," offering art and music exhibitions as well as workshops and courses on a variety of traditional Ottoman art forms (see "Workshops in Ottoman Arts," below). Rooms are also designed to be exhibition spaces for the works created by the students within. The courtyard oasis is a perfect place for a break from pounding the hard pavement of Sultanahmet.

Caferiye Sok., Soğukkuyu Çikmazı 1 (next to the Ottoman Hotel), Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/528-0089.** www.caferagamedresesi.com. Free admission. Daily 9am–6pm. Tram: Gülhane or Sultanahmet.

Workshops in Ottoman Arts

No visit to the epicenter of Ottoman arts would be complete without trying your hand at the classic art of ebru, or paper marbling, calligraphy, or on a soulful *saz*. Seeking to promote Turkey's rich and vibrant cultural goods, **Les Arts Turcs,** Incili Çavus Sok. 37, 3rd floor, Sultanahmet (✆ **0212/520-7743;** www.lesartsturcs.org), organizes private or group lessons in all three and then some. Interested in Byzantine mosaic art? Check. Want to learn how to apply a henna tattoo? Check. Willing to accept a dare to show off your belly-dancing prowess? You can do it all here. Les Arts Turcs also organizes private language lessons. Some of their group workshops are organized in conjunction with the **Caferağa Medresesi** (see above), a project of the Turkish Cultural Foundation Service (www.tkhv.org). The restored *medrese* now serves as a handicrafts center offering multiday workshops in ebru, calligraphy, illumination, miniature painting, jewelry, and decorative ornamentation of wood, fabric, or glass, among others.

Column of Constantine When Constantine established the city on the hill as the capital of the Roman Empire, one of his first projects was the construction of a forum, built just outside the then-city walls. The forum was circular with two monumental gates, and at its center Constantine erected a monumental column carved of red porphyry stone and topped by a Corinthian capital bearing his own likeness. A drawing by Melchior Lorick (1561) contains an illustration of the column showing a relief on the north, Senate-facing side of the base.

The Forum of Constantine is said to have been the inspiration for Bernini in his conception of St. Peter's Square in Rome. The column has been a victim of earthquakes and elements: In A.D. 418, part of the base cracked, prompting its reinforcement via the use of a ringed metal brace (additional braces were added later), and in 1106, the statue of Constantine was toppled by a hurricane. Manuel Komnenos presided over the first restoration of the monument, placing a simple cross atop the column in place of the destroyed statue of the emperor. Since then, periodic repairs have been done to cracks in the marble, and in 2003 a full-fledged, comprehensive restoration was begun.

Corner of Yeniçeriler Cad. (where the avenue changes its name from Divanyolu and behind the Çemberlitaş Tram stop) and Mahmut Paşa Yokuşu, Çemberlitaş. Tram: Çemberlitaş.

Kabasakal Medresi No longer a school for Koranic studies, this restored 17th-century *medrese* nevertheless fulfils its earlier mission. Built by Şeyhülislam Mehmed Efendi, the structure now serves as the Istanbul Handicrafts Center, where students and practitioners of traditional Ottoman arts can ply their trade. The small workshops ring a lovely rectangular porticoed courtyard.

Kabasakal Cad. 5, Istanbul Sanatlari Çarşısı (next to Yeşil Ev), Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/517-6785.** Free admission. Daily 9:30am–6:30pm. Tram: Sultanahmet.

Museum of the History of Islamic Science and Technology (Islam Bilim ve Teknoloji Tarıhı Müzesi) By the time the European Renaissance had begun to flower in the 16th century, thought leaders within the Islamic world (including non-Islamic

minorities) had already developed 8 centuries of scientific scholarship. This museum, installed in the **Imperial Stables** buildings in Gülhane Park in May 2008, compiles this body of knowledge along with context for Islamic society's early contribution to and later cross-pollination with European scientific innovation.

Imperial Stables, Gülhane Park. For information contact the tourist information office in Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/518-1802**. Wed–Mon 9am–4pm. Admission 5TL. Tram: Gülhane or Sultanahmet.

Soğukçeşme Sokağı ★★ A cobbled mews of 12 wooden Ottoman houses and a roman cistern are sandwiched between the outer wall of Topkapı Palace and the imposing backside of the Ayasofya. The buildings were restored in the 1970s by the Turkish Touring Club and now comprise the **Ayasofya Konakları Hotel** (p. 76). The **Istanbul Library** (see "Libraries & Cultural Centers," later in this chapter) and restaurant **Sarnıç** (p. 102) are also located here.

Access to the left of the entrance to Topkapı Palace, up the hill from the entrance to Gülhane Park, or along Caferiye Sok. from Ayasofya Meydanı. Tram: Gülhane or Sultanahmet.

Sultanahmet Prison When a prison in proximity to the nearby criminal courts was built in 1919, the local residents said "there goes the neighborhood." In fact, the then-occupants of the Şükrü Bey Mansion (now the Yeşil Ev hotel and restaurant, p. 103) constructed a high wall to enclose the garden for safekeeping. The prison, now the **Four Seasons Hotel** (p. 72), hosted such Turkish literary icons as Nazım Hikmet, Aziz Nesin, Rıfat Ilgaz, and Yaşar Kemal, all labeled as political dissidents. The prison was closed in the 1970s.

In the Four Seasons (p. 72), Tevkifhane Sok. 1, Sultanahmet. www.fourseasons.com/istanbul. Hotel common areas open 24 hr.; bar and restaurant have individual hours. Tram: Sultanahmet.

Vakıflar Halı Müz esi (Foundation Carpet Museum) Some of Turkey's oldest textile treasures are housed in the private pavilion used by the sultan for prayers. The collection features primarily Usçak, Bergama, and Konya carpets, and *kilims* dating from the 16th to 19th centuries.

Blue Mosque Imperial Pavilion, Sultanahmet (facing the tourist entrance to the mosque, the pavilion and museum are to your left). ✆ **0212/518-1330.** www.istanbul.gov.tr. Free admission. Tues–Sat 9am–noon and 1–4pm. Tram: Sultanahmet.

BEYAZIT & NEAR THE GRAND BAZAAR

Arch of Theodosius There's very little left apart from the toppled Triumphal Arch scattered on either side of Ordu Caddesi, discovered during the construction of Beyazıt Square in the 1950s. Nevertheless, there's something intangibly momentous about wandering through such a thickly layered cultural metropolis and stumbling upon the main gate into the city ruled by the last sovereign of the Roman Empire. The arch was built adjacent to the Forum of Theodosius, which the emperor modeled on the Forum of Trajan in Rome. The forum, or what's left of it, remains buried several feet below Beyazıt Square. It was also called the Forum Tauri, after the colossal bronze bull that greeted visitors at the center of the city.

From the remains, researchers were able to reconstruct (on paper, at least) the monument: The arch was composed of a high center arch flanked by two shorter lateral arches supported by eight sets of four columns topped by Corinthian capitals. Earthquakes and routine sieges on the city reduced much of the forum to rubble well before the arrival of the Ottoman Turks, and many of the buildings constructed later used the site as a marble quarry (some of the columns in the Basilica Cistern originated here, for example).

Ordu Cad. (opposite Istanbul University), Beyazıt. Tram: Beyazıt.

Atik Ali Paşa Camii A smaller version of the Ulu Camii in Bursa and similar in style to the original Fatih Camii before it was destroyed in the 1766 earthquake, the Atik Ali Paşa represents a transition between Selçuk and traditional Ottoman architecture. The mosque was the center of a complex built in 1496 by the eunuch Grand Vizier of Beyazıt II, Hadim Ali Paşa. The *tekke,* or derviş lodge, soup kitchens, and part of the *medrese* were razed for the widening of Divanyolu.

Divanyolu, next to the Column of Constantine. No phone. Tram: Beyazıt.

Bodrum Camii or the Myrelaion The story of this building is inextricably tied to the life of Romano Lakapenos, son of Armenian peasants whose father was an imperial guardsman. His biography is, as expected, tortuously long and convoluted, so suffice it to say that Lakapenos distinguished himself as a militarily and politically savvy individual who became the trusted friend, and then father-in-law, of the young Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. In A.D. 920, a year after the wedding of his daughter to the underaged emperor, Lakapenos was crowned co-emperor, and in later years bestowed the same honor upon his own sons Christopher, Stephen, and Constantine.

Around the time of his ascension to the throne, Lakapenos acquired a building, itself with a bit of history. Here we go again: The building once was an unfinished 5th-century-A.D. rotunda so huge that if completed would have been second in size only to the Pantheon in Rome. Later, it was surmounted—with the help of a raised platform—by a building reportedly used as a market and place of executions. When Lakapenos bought the building, he had it converted into a monastery and added the adjoining church, called the Myrelaion, or Place of Myrrh (finally, to the punch line). The oversize foundation of the church allowed it to sit at the same level as the palace. The church is built on a dome-in-cross plan, which makes it the first of all of the churches of the same type in Constantinople. When converted to a mosque, the Ottomans called it Bodrum Camii, or mosque with a cellar. The adjoining palace has been replaced by concrete blocks.

Laleli Cad., Mesipaşa Cad., Laleli. No phone. Tram: Laleli.

Church of St. Theodore We really know very little about the origins of this Byzantine church. Scholars are not even sure as to which St. Theodore the church was dedicated. Still, we can at least narrow down the construction of the building to a 200-year period between the 12th and 14th centuries. The church was predictably converted to a mosque immediately after the conquest and is alternatively known as the Kilise Camii (Church Mosque) and the Molla Gürani Camii, after the Kurdish scholar, tutor to Mehmet the Conqueror, and the first Mufti of Istanbul. Inside are what appear to be a number of recycled 6th-century-A.D. architectural elements (columns, capitals, supports). The building underwent a restoration in 1937, during which mosaics were revealed from under the whitewash. These are located primarily in the south dome of the exonarthex depicting the Virgin Mary surrounded by prophets.

Tirendaz Sok., Vefa (from Şifahane Sok., walk down Molla Şemsettin Camii Sok. and turn right. You'll see a seemingly out-of-place red-brick domed building). No phone. Tram: Beyazıt.

Kalenderhane Camii ★ The Kalenderhane Mosque was originally, and incorrectly, identified as the Church of Christ Akataleptos. But when restorations in 1966 revealed two frescoes of the Mother of God Kyriotissa (Greek for enthroned), the jig was up.

Fun Facts Locomotive Lore

The construction of the original Orient Express was backed by King Leopold II, but the tracks fell short of the center city. Passengers were forced to complete the journey by bus and boat. In 1888, the Austrian Baron Hirsch completed the job. The meandering trajectory of the train tracks through the flatlands of Thrace owes its course to the fact that the Baron was paid per kilometer.

Actually, the first building on the site, taking advantage of the proximity of the aqueduct, was a Roman bath. The bath gave way to a small basilica, and then in the 7th century A.D., another portion was added to the south side. The Kalenderhane, built at the end of the 12th century, incorporates the main apse of the latter church (not the mosaic depicting the Presentation of the Temple). In 1204, the victorious Latin Crusaders embellished the church with a fresco cycle illustrating the life of St. Francis of Assisi, the earliest fresco cycle depicting the saint in the world. Another "first" is the Presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple, the only mosaic predating the iconoclastic period in the city. Also notable are two 13th- or 14th-century sculptural representations of the Throne of Justice and of Prayer, located in the right and left architraves.

16 Mart Şehitler Cad., Vefa. No phone. Tram: Üniversite.

Museum of Calligraphy (Türk Vakıf Sanatları Müzesi) The fine art of calligraphy was the most important one in the Ottoman Empire. Sultans Beyazıt II and Ahmet III were themselves masters in the art, and some of the more elaborate imperial seals (or *tuğra*) were set to paper by their hands. Dedicated entirely to this art, the Museum of Calligraphy is the only one of its kind, housed in what was originally the *medrese* of the Beyazıt complex, and in the 20th century, a municipal library. The museum exhibits illuminated Korans from all over the empire, *tuğras,* official documents in elaborate script, and various tools of the trade, all displayed in the evocative workrooms set around a porticoed courtyard. The museum was closed for restoration on my last visit, so call ahead before going.

Beyazıt Meydanı. ✆ **0212/527-5851.** Admission 5TL. Tues–Sat 8:30am–4pm. Tram: Beyazıt.

Nuruosmaniye Külliyesi The "Light of Osman" mosque was revolutionary when it was built in the middle of the 18th century. With the baroque style at its zenith in Europe, Sultan Mahmut I set to work, not without just a little resistance from the more traditional clergy. The architect, Simon Kalfa, found a "compromise" and incorporated the European baroque style to traditional Ottoman forms. The mosque was completed 8 years after it was begun by Mahmut's brother and successor, Osman II.

The irregular horseshoe-shape courtyard, shaded in plane trees and horse chestnuts, is alternatively a quiet oasis for contemplation or a bustling pathway leading to the frenzy of the Grand Bazaar. It all depends upon the time of day you visit (or day: the Grand Bazaar is closed on Sun), or whether it's high tourist season. At one time, the courtyard was an impromptu staging area for the Anatolian troubadours, called *aşıklar* (Turkish for lover, but more appropriate would be lovelorn).

Nuruosmaniye Cad. (from Divanyolu to Vezirhan Cad.). No phone. Tram: Çemberlitaş.

Rüstem Paşa Külliyesi ★★ It is said that this Grand Vizier was a true Ali Baba, if you will. His nickname was Kehle-i-Ikbal, or the Louse of Fortune. How appropriate then that his namesake would be located amid one of the city's most commercial districts. The mosque and complex were built by Sinan in 1561. Primarily serving a blue-collar community of hardware merchants, the mosque is the most decorated one in the city, tiled top to bottom with dazzling Iznik tiles dancing with tulips, hyacinths, and spring flowers. It was commissioned by Süleyman's Prime Minister and son-in-law, Rüstem Paşa. The second-story prayer hall sits atop a street-level space designed to accommodate the commercial district below, and the prayer hall is accessed via a narrow quartet of staircases. Built on an octagonal plan, the Rüstem Paşa Camii is believed to be the precursor for Sinan's design of the Selimiye in Edirne.

Uzun Çarşı Cad. at Hasır Cılar/Kutucular cads., Tahtakale-Eminönü, Eminönü (opposite the bus depot adjacent to the bazaar). No phone. Tram: Eminönü; Bus: 35, 36CE, 44B, 74, 80, 81, or 90.

Zeyrek

Church of the Pantocrator (Zeyrek Camii) This former monastery church is one of the most important historic landmarks of the Byzantine period; however, because the structure is in a sad state of neglect, a detour here can only be recommended in tandem with a stroll through the narrow streets of the Zeyrek neighborhood. Dedicated to St. Saviour Pantocrator, the building is actually a composite of two churches and a chapel, making it the second-largest church in Istanbul after Ayasofya. The monastery was founded by Empress Eirene, wife of John II Comnenus, who completed the south church prior to her death in 1124. She was also the first to be buried here (her sarcophagus was moved in the 1960s to the Archaeology Museum, but now resides in the exonarthex of the Ayasofya). The northern church was added by the emperor (her husband) after Eirene's death and dedicated to Virgin Eleousa, the Merciful or Charitable. Nothing remains of its original ornamentation. The emperor also had the churches connected through the jerry-rigging of a chapel between the north and south church, which also required the demolition of part of the exterior walls of the two buildings. The *minbar* (pulpit), added when the church was converted into a mosque in the 15th century, is composed of recycled fragments of Byzantine sculpture. Although the building preserves some of its original decoration (marble pavement, door frames in the narthex, marble apse), it's almost impossible to get a sense of the interior, as each section has been blocked off by wooden partitions.

From Atatürk Bulv., follow Itfaiye Cad. and take the first street to the right. No phone. Open daily at prayer times only.

Aksaray

Hırka-i Ş erif C amii (Mosque of the Holy Man tle) The cloak worn by the Prophet Mohammed was under the care of the Veys family until Sultan Ahmet I had it brought to Istanbul in 1611. Sultan Abdülhamid I kept it in a small room he had built especially for the mantle. Then later, Sultan Abdülmecid cleared about 700 homes to build the mosque presently on this site (constructed 1847–51). The pew on the northern side of the mosque was exclusively for the use of the sultan. Today the mantle is displayed only during the month of Ramadan.

Hırka-i Şerif (where it becomes Keçeciler Cad.), Karagümrük/Fatih. No phone. Tram: To Aksaray, change for train to Emniyet, then walk up Akdeniz Cad. and turn left onto Sarıgüzel Cad.

ALONG THE GOLDEN HORN

Ayvansaray, Balat & Fener

When Fatih Mehmet the Conqueror proclaimed freedom to all despite race or religion, many of the Greeks who had fled the city under siege, plus others, settled in this neighborhood. These Greeks were known as "Phanariots" and were an integral part of Ottoman life. Many of the stately homes, schools, monasteries, and churches date to this period of prosperity. Built on one of the city's seven central hills, this neighborhood was called Petrion (rock) by the Byzantines, and it was primarily inhabited by Rum. To the north, bordering the Fener neighborhood, a community of predominantly Balat Jews was represented by its share of influential politicians, physicians, and diplomats. But in spite of the relative prosperity of the neighborhood, Balat never quite rose to the level of neighboring Fener and still maintains the stigma of being Fener's poorer cousin.

Ahrida Sinagogue The first synagogue in Istanbul was constructed by a group of Macedonian Jews emigrating from the town of Ohri, for which the synagogue is named. It dates to the first half of the 15th century, when Istanbul was still under Byzantine rule, but after Macedonia had already fallen to the Ottomans. Over the next 500 years, the congregation grew to include Jews from Spain, Germany, and Russia. The synagogue was restored in the 17th century. Much of the Jewish community in Balat has moved on to other of the city's neighborhoods, but the synagogue still operates for a much-reduced number of remaining congregants. The most striking feature is the *bima,* constructed in the form of a ship's bow. The recurring images of boats, seen etched above doorways and windows around the neighborhood, represent the lifeline provided to the expelled Jews of Spain in 1492 by Beyazıt II.

Vodina Cad. 9 (extension of Kürkçüçeşme Sok.), Balat. Visits by appointment only. ✆ **0212/523-7407.** www.musevicemaati.com. Ferry: Fener; Bus: 36CE, 399B, 399C, 399D, 44B, 55T, 99, or 99A from Eminönü.

Ayadimitri Kilisesi (St. Demetrios Kanavis Kilisesi) This 13th-century Byzantine church housed the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate from 1597 until the Patriarchate moved to its current location in 1601. A church bearing this name has existed on the site since 1334, but the current church dates only to the first half of the 18th century.

Corner of Mustafapaşa Bostanı Sok. and Ağaclı Çeşme Sok., Balat. No phone. www.ec-patr.org. Ferry: Fener; Bus: 36CE, 399B, 399C, 399D, 44B, 55T, 99, or 99A from Eminönü.

Atik Mustafapasa Camii There have been several theories as to the origins of this former Byzantine church, but none has emerged as the fitting piece to the puzzle. Some say that it was built by Leo I in A.D. 458 for SS. Peter and Mark. A second theory puts construction in the 9th or 10th century A.D. and suggests that if this were so, it would have been the earliest example of a dome-in-cross church in Constantinople and therefore the precursor for the type of church that spread all over Russia in the 11th century. The building lay abandoned after the Ottoman conquest until it was converted into a mosque several decades later; the dome dates to this period of reconstruction, and many of the early architectural features were lost.

Cember Sok. btw. Mustafa Paşa Bostanı Sok. and the Golden Horn hwy. No phone. Ferry: Fener; Bus: 36CE, 399B, 399C, 399D, 44B, 55T, 99, or 99A from Eminönü.

Ayazma and the Church of St. Mary of Blachernae This unremarkable church sits atop the site of one of the most celebrated shrines to the Virgin Mary in Byzantium. But even before Constantine set foot inside the city walls, the spring located on this spot was considered sacred. Citizens of Constantinople made regular pilgrimages to the

spring, and in the 5th century A.D., Empress Augusta Pulcheria, wife of Emperor Marcian, had a church built on the site. Sometime between A.D. 457 and A.D. 474, Emperor Leo I added a marble statue of Mary, from whose hands flowed the holy water of the spring, as well as a sacred pool. He later added a chapel to house the relics of the Virgin Mary, which included the holy robe stolen by citizens of Constantinople on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and a gold and silver icon of the Virgin. This icon was paraded along the battlements when the city was under siege by the Avars in A.D. 626 and is credited with saving the city. According to another tradition, the Holy Shroud (of Turin) was brought here in A.D. 944. The church succumbed to the wrath of the iconoclast period, and later, to fire. The church, and indeed the entire complex of buildings, was destroyed by fire in 1434. A replacement chapel was built in 1867, and later other sections were added on.

Mustafapaşa Bostanı Sok., Fener. No phone. www.ec-patr.org. Ferry: Fener; Bus: 36CE, 399B, 399C, 399D, 44B, 55T, 99, or 99A from Eminönü.

Metochion of Mount Sinai A metochion was essentially an ecclesiastical embassy church representing an autocephalous ("self-headed" or autonomous) branch of the Orthodox Church. It was also the parish of a monastery or patriarch. This is one of the more stately Fenerіote mansions in the city, set on the edge of green wedged between the coastal highway and a narrow and deadly section of Mürselpaşa Caddesi. From 1686 to 1967, when the Turkish government confiscated the building, the metochion served as the residence and representative of the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. The untidy accouterments of a family of squatters litter the courtyard of the adjacent chapel and monastery of St. John the Baptist, but it may be a relief to know that the present residents are only squatting on an 18th-century reconstruction of the chapel. With the frenzy of restoration projects being carried out in advance of Istanbul 2010, it is only a matter of time before the site is reclaimed and visitors are able to tour the complex.

Mürselpaşa Cad., near Hızır Çavuş Köprübaşı, on the green btw. the highway opposite the Balat Iskelesi/ferry docks. For information, contact the Patriarchate. ✆ **0212/531-9670.** Ferry: Fener; Bus: 36CE, 399B, 399C, 399D, 44B, 55T, 99, or 99A from Eminönü.

St. Mary of the Mongols/Kanlı Kilise This is the only Byzantine church to remain continuously in the hands of its Greek congregation to this day. This unusual right of ownership was bestowed upon the Greek congregants by imperial decree under the sultanate of Fatih Mehmet. The *firman,* or sultan's imperial seal, is on display in the interior of the church.

According to tradition, this church was built (or rebuilt) around 1282 by Princess Maria Palaeologina, illegitimate daughter of Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus. (Other sources suggest that the church was founded by Isaac Dukas, uncle of Michael VIII, around 1261.) The princess was married off to a Mongols Khan by her father in 1265, but after the death of her husband 15 years later (assassination, actually), Maria returned to Constantinople, founded the church and a convent, and lived out the remainder of her life as a nun.

The building was originally constructed on a traditional quatrefoil plan, but the southern end of the church was completely destroyed, to be replaced by an incongruous square narthex that distorts the harmony of the original. The one major treasure remaining from its Byzantine period is a portative mosaic of Theotokos Pammakaristos, "the All-Joyous Mother of God."

Tevkii Cafer Mektebi Sok., Fener. ✆ **0212/521-7139.** By appointment only. Ferry: Fener; Bus: 36CE, 399B, 399C, 399D, 44B, 55T, 99, or 99A from Eminönü.

St. Stephen of the Bulgars (Bulgar Kilisesi) ★ Although Bulgaria gained autocephalous recognition by Constantinople as early as A.D. 927, it wasn't until the nationalist movements of the 19th century that Istanbul's Bulgarian community was granted its own church. The first church was a small wooden one erected in 1849. As with all too many wooden structures in the city, it succumbed to a fire. The replacement had to be both fire resistant and appropriate for the weakness of the soil. In the end, plans for a cast-iron cathedral were drawn, and the church was produced, piece by piece, in Vienna and shipped down the Danube and through the Black Sea in sections. The result is a stunning, 500-ton neo-Gothic slab of iron affixed to a steel frame. A visit to the upper gallery will get you a close-up of the deceptively ornate workmanship—even at 6 inches of distance, the columns, pilasters, and frieze seem as if they were carved from wood.

Mürselpaşa Cad. 85, Balat. No phone. Daily 9am–5pm. www.svetistephan.com. Ferry: Fener; Bus: 36CE, 399B, 399C, 399D, 44B, 55T, 99, or 99A from Eminönü.

Tekfur Sarayı (The Palace of Constantine Porphyrogenitus) Save for the crumbled stones of a handful of dungeons and towers, this is all that remains of the palace complex of Blachernae, and one of the few secular Byzantine buildings that remain, comparatively, intact. It is hard to imagine the opulence of the palace at its zenith; however, one could hazard a guess if it's true that the Stonemaker's Diamond—the one in the Topkapı Treasury—was found in the rubble here. The building is usually identified as the Palace of Constantine Porphyrogenitus and dated to the 13th century. Typical of Byzantine construction, the palace walls are made of alternating brick and marble.

Şişhane Cad., Ayvansaray (along the land walls). ✆ **0212/522-1750.** http://english.istanbul.gov.tr. Admission 3TL. Daily 9am–7pm. Ferry: Fener; Bus: 36CE, 399B, 399C, 399D, 44B, 55T, 99, or 99A from Eminönü.

Ayakapi & Cibali

Aya Nikola Kilisesi The waterfront location of St. Nicholas is an appropriate one for a basilica dedicated to the patron saint of mariners and children. It dates at least to 1538, the year in which the Patriarch of Jerusalem makes mention of it. The current basilica, which was constructed in the courtyard of the ruins of the earlier church, dates only to 1837. It served as the metochion to the Vatopedi Monastery of Mt. Athos (Aynaroz in Turkish or Agion Ores in Greek). The feast of St. Nicholas is celebrated here every December 6.

Abdülezel Pasa Cad. 255, Ayakapı. ✆ **0212/521-2602.** Ferry: Fener; Bus: 36CE, 399B, 399C, 399D, 44B, 55T, 99, or 99A from Eminönü.

Gül Camii According to tradition, this Byzantine church is a 9th-century-A.D. construction that housed the holy relics of St. Theodosia, an 8th-century-A.D. nun who was tortured and then martyred defending a sacred icon of Christ set into Constantinople's bronze gate. As the resting place for the saint's bones, the church became a point of pilgrimage, as the relics were believed to have healing powers.

In fact, the church is alternately thought to be that of Saint Euphemia, Saint Theodosia, and Eurgetis Monastery, and indeed the entire affair dates only to the 12th century. To complicate the legend, Catholic sources question the entire validity of St. Theodosia's martyrdom.

The cellar of the church was used as a shipyard warehouse immediately after the conquest and was converted into a mosque in the 16th century. The interior is a bit whitewashed and dreary. A tomb to the right of the *mimbar* is inscribed as "One of Jesus's

 Companions, the Apostle"; one tradition places the tomb of Constantine XI Dragases, last Emperor of Byzantium, here, while locals believe that it is the tomb of "Gül Baba."

Ayakapı Mah., Vakıf Mektebi Sok., Ayakapı. No phone. The caretaker's quarters are to the left of the entrance; ring the doorbell for entry during typical business hours. Ferry: Fener; Bus: 36CE, 399B, 399C, 399D, 44B, 55T, 99, or 99A from Eminönü.

10 BEYOĞLU

GALATASARAY, TÜNEL & TEPEBAŞI

Balıkpazarı (Galatasaray Fish Market) This fish market is a colorful cluster of much more than just fishmongers. Having just undergone a period of restoration (which in my opinion whitewashed some of the charm out), it also contains *dükkan* (small grocers), souvenir sellers, restaurants, tempting *tantuni* joints (fast-food sellers of fried spiced beef), and other must-try street-food vendors. I'm a bit anxious that eventually it will homogenize into just another outdoor shopping mall, but let's just cross our fingers and not get ahead of ourselves.

Running perpendicular to Şahne Tiyatro Sokağı are three very picturesque alleys as well as an unobtrusive Armenian Church. The **Üc Horon Ermeni Kilisesi** (also called the Surp Yerrortuyan, both meaning Holy Trinity; Balıkpazarı 24Ab/6r) is a working church and the largest Armenian Church in Istanbul. It dates to 1838.

To the right of Şahne Tiyatro Sokağı is **Nevişade Street,** a narrow cobbled mews overflowing with traditional *meyhanes.* One can barely squeeze by on a summer's eve, which is half the fun. Try to nab a seat on the upper balconies (or roof terraces) if you can; these are often closed from October through April. From Şahne Tiyatro Sokağı, branch off the quieter Duduodalar Street and the **Avrupa Pasajı.** The Avrupa, or European Passage, used to be reveted in mirrors designed to enhance the light emitted by the then-gas lamps, and thus was formerly called the Aynalı Pasajı or Mirrored Arcade. Here is a pleasing mixture of high-end antiques sellers, Anatolian textile boutiques, and downmarket souvenir shops.

Istiklal Cad., opposite the Galatasaray Lisesi (near Meşrutiyet Cad.). No phone. Daily dawn–dusk. Restaurants open until late. Nostalgic Tramway; Tünel from Karaköy.

Çiçek Pasajı (Flower Passage) An icon of Beyoğlu's past and present, the Çiçek Pasajı occupies a stunning rococo arcade, the original of which dates to 1876. It was constructed as a bazaar and apartment building shortly after the 1870 Beyoğlu fire, when it soon became known as the Cité de Pera. After World War I, Russian aristocrats settled in alongside the cluster of florists and thus the building acquired its present name. This is also where the tradition of tables spilling out onto the street got started. The entire affair collapsed in 1978 due to neglect but was reconstructed a decade later. Today the soaring space teems with *meyhanes* and beer halls, staffed by a collection of eager, competing, and vociferous waitstaff. The arcade follows an "L" shape with the long portion running parallel to the adjacent Şahne Sokağı, better known by the name of the merchandise sold here: fish (see "Balıkpazarı," above).

Istiklal Cad., opposite the Galatasaray Lisesi (near Meşrutiyet Cad.). No phone. Daily dawn–dusk. Restaurants open until late. Nostalgic Tramway; Tünel from Karaköy.

Galata Mevlevihanesi This derviş lodge, now a museum, was once one of the most important derviş lodges in Istanbul. The lodge was built on the hunting farm of Iskender

Value See the Whirling Dervişes

The **Sufi Music Concert & Sema Ceremony** (ceremony of the Whirling Dervishes) ★★★ is held on the second and last Sunday of the month at the historic Galata Mevlevihanesi, Divan Edebiyatı Müzesi, Galip Dede Caddesi, at the end of Istiklal Caddesi in Tünel (ticket office ✆ **0535/210-4565;** reservations ✆ **0212/252-0773** from 9am–5pm or 0505/678-0618; www.rumimevlevi.com). ***Note:*** The Mevlevihanesi is closed until December 2010. The dervişes take their show on the road, so to speak, performing the ceremony Tuesday through Saturday at 7:30pm in various locations around town (Wed and Fri concerts are for groups only). Tickets for individuals are 35TL; add 10TL for the Saturday-night show. Check the website for details and alterations in schedules, as changes happen often. Other ad-hoc ceremonies are staged throughout the Old City in summertime, so be on the lookout for flyers at your hotel announcing locations, times, and prices.

Paşa, governor of the province under Sultan Beyazıt II, in 1491. But while it is the oldest surviving *tekke* in the city, the buildings on-site date to the period after the 1776 fire. The *tekke* is comprised of a *semahane* (ritual hall), derviş cells, library, *sebil* (fountain), kitchen, *türbe,* and cemetery.

The octagonal wooden *semahane,* built in the baroque style of the 18th century, is used as a museum for the display of musical instruments, manuscripts, and other items related to the culture of the sect. One of the more notable residents of the cemetery is Kumbaracı Ahmet Paşa, né Claude Alexandre Bonneval (later Count) in France under the reign of Louis IV. His military career, while distinguished, was punctuated by repeated upheaval; eventually, he offered his services to the Sultan, after which he changed his name to Ahmed and converted to Islam. He swiftly rose in the ranks to Paşa and served the sultan until he died in Istanbul in 1747.

Galip Dede Cad. 15, Tünel. ✆ **0212/245-2121.** www.galatamevlevi.org. Admission: 5TL. Wed–Mon 9am–4pm. Nostalgic Tramway; Tünel from Karaköy. Closed for restoration through December 2010.

Galatasaray High School (Galatasaray Lisesi) The school's origins date back to the 15th century, when on a hunting expedition in the area, then a thickly wooded forest, Sultan Beyazıt II came upon an old man who had fought in the siege of Istanbul in 1453. At the end of this encounter, the man presented the sultan with one red and one yellow rose from his garden (the colors of the Galatasaray soccer team) and requested that a house of learning be built on the spot. The school was founded in 1481 as Galata Sarayı, the fourth of a network of existing palace schools. During the era of the Tanzimat, the school became a window onto the West, and much of Turkish-French relations have their origins here.

For the past 500 years, Galatasaray High School has graduated grand viziers and palace administrators, and later, prime ministers, poets, artists, and journalists. Even today, the high school continues to set the standards of learning for all of Turkey.

Istiklal Cad., across from the Galatasaray Fish Market (Balıkpazarı). ✆ **0212/244-3666** or 0212/249-6698. Open with prior permission from the management. Nostalgic Tramway; Tünel from Karaköy.

Military Museum ★★ Value Feared, respected, and loathed for 500 years, the Ottoman warrior was the brick on which the Ottoman dynasty was built. Indeed, it was the rising influence of industry and economics over combat and conquest that contributed to the ultimate downfall of the empire. Since war plays a pivotal role in the history and culture of Turkey, no visit to Turkey would be complete without a stopover at the Military Museum. Most people breeze through without a sideways glance, hurriedly following the arrows that direct visitors to the **Mehter Concert** ★★★. This startlingly powerful musical performance re-creates the traditional military band of the Janissaries, the elite Ottoman corps abolished when their power became too great. The musical arrangement is an unexpectedly organized cacophony of sounds that, preceding the approaching army, also served to instill terror in the opposing army.

The exhibit, housed in the former military academy where Atatürk received his education (the building was converted into a museum in 1993), contains a chronological and functional assemblage of artifacts of warfare from the Ottoman era through World War II. The exhibit is anything but dull, showcasing chain-mail and bronze armor for both cavalry and horses, leather and metalwork costumes, hand-sewn leather and arrow bags, swords engraved with fruit and flower motifs or Islamic inscriptions, and even a petroleum-driven rifle. Not to be missed is the hall of tents, an unanticipated display of *in situ* elaborately embroidered and silk encampment tents used on war expeditions.

Askeri Müse ve Kültür Sitesi Komutanlığı, Harbiye (about .8km/½ mile north of Taksim along Cumhuriyet Cad.). ✆ **0212/233-2720.** www.tsk.tr/muze_internet/askeri_muze.htm. Admission 3TL. Wed–Sun 9am–5pm. Closed Jan 1 and the first day of Ramadan and Kurban Bayramı. *Mehter* concert 3pm (English) and 3:30pm (Turkish). Metro: Osmanbey; Bus: 43, 46, 48, 54, 66, 69A, 70, 74, and others.

Pera Museum Located on five floors in the heart of Old Pera, the Pera Museum houses a small but solid collection of Kütahya ceramics, Ottoman weights and measures, and Ottoman portraiture from the 18th to the 20th centuries rarely seen outside of Turkey. The portraits alone are worth the price of admission, and a quick lap around the museum can be accomplished in an hour, if you really try hard. The museum also mounts some of the city's more prestigious exhibitions and screens independent films, including as host of the International Documentary Film Festival.

Meşrutiyet Cad. 141, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/334-9900.** www.peramuzesi.org.tr. Admission 7TL. Tues–Sat 10am–7pm; Sun noon–6pm. Closed Jan 1 and first day of Şeker Bayramı and Kurban Bayramı. Nostalgic Tramway; Tünel from Karaköy; Bus: 325YK2, 32T, 35C, 54E, 54HS, 54HT, 61B, 69A, 71T, 72T, 74, 74A, 76T, 77MT, 80T, 83, 87, 93T, 96T, E50, E51, or E52.

Tünel Pasajı This highly evocative arcade is formed by the convergence of three separate buildings. The style is neoclassical, but the dates of construction are unknown. The antiques shops and ateliers occupying the spaces are slowly but surely giving way to modish cafes and restaurants (House Café, p. 113, is on the far corner), but some might say that this enhances the spaces' utility.

Tünel, opposite the upper entrance to the Tünel Funicular. Nostalgic Tramway; Tünel from Karaköy.

GALATA & KARAKÖY

Arap Camii (Arab Mosque) Several stories compete in regard to the origins of this building. According to one source, the mosque dates to the Arab siege of A.D. 718, after which it was converted by Dominican Friars into a church. According to John Freely, author of the heavily researched *Strolling Through Istanbul,* the building was constructed by the Dominicans between 1323 and 1337. The building has undergone quite a bit of

repair and additions; it is now once again (if one believes the earlier version) a mosque topped by a belfry/minaret, with an interior courtyard and *şadirvan* (fountain).

Fütühat Sok., Karaköy. No phone. Open daily at prayer times only. Tram: Karaköy; Tünel to Karaköy; IDO Ferry from Kadıköy; Bus: 28, 28T, 30D, 35, 74, 74A, 80, 91O, or 99A.

Church of SS. Peter and Paul Secreted behind an unobtrusive pink and purple gate is a Dominican church built in 1604 by the Genoese. The church was destroyed twice by fire and then was rebuilt by the renowned Fossati brothers from 1841 to 1843. The exterior of the church—essentially a narrow alleyway enclosed by high walls—is covered in inscriptions. The main treasure of the church is the famous icon of Mary Odighitria (the guide). According to tradition, Luke himself painted the icon. Although its authenticity has never been proven, this seems unimportant to those who gaze upon it. At the back of the church is a well-preserved section of the original Genoese defensive walls.

Galata Kulesi Sok. (also written as Kuledibi) 44 (just down the steep hill from Galata House restaurant on the right where the street curves), Galata. ✆ **0212/249-2385.** Mon–Sat 7am–5pm; Sun 10:30am–noon. Ring the doorbell. Tram: Karaköy; Tünel to Karaköy; IDO Ferry from Kadıköy; Bus: 28, 28T, 30D, 35, 74, 74A, 80, 91O, or 99A.

Yeraltı Camii (Underground Mosque) This eerie underground mosque occupies the crypt of a former castle that was probably associated with the Castle of Galata. Tradition has it that the colossal chain used to blockade ships from entering the Golden Horn was anchored here. What remained of the ruins (the castle was destroyed during the Ottoman conquest) was converted into a mosque. The space is created by a low-ceilinged, vaulted maze supported by squat pillars. The columns are arranged in six rows of nine, forming little compartments for private prayer. Located in a side chapel are the tombs of two sainted Arab warriors killed in the first Arab siege. The location of these graves was revealed to a Nakşibendi derviş in a dream in 1640. It wasn't until later, in 1757, that the cellar space was converted into a mosque. It is also known as the Kursunlu Mahzen Camii (Gunpowder Warehouse Mosque).

Karantina Sok., Karaköy. No phone. Tram: Karaköy; Tünel to Karaköy; IDO Ferry from Kadıköy; Bus: 28, 28T, 30D, 35, 74, 74A, 80, 91O, or 99A.

TAKSIM

Atatürk Kültür Merkezi (Atatürk Cultural Center) As the focal point of Taksim Meydanı, AKM is not only a multipurpose cultural center housing the State Opera and Ballet, but an Istanbul icon. In the summer, the AKM hosts the city's arts and culture festival. It also serves as a venue for exhibitions during the Biennial. The building dates to 1969, although a fire in 1970 required it to undergo significant repairs. The resulting edifice is a controversial flash from the drearily functional Republican past, a radiator grill with seating. Still, Istanbullus love to hate it. So in preparation for Istanbul's 2010 reign as European Capital of Culture, instead of tearing it down, officials caved to the will of preservationists and hired a high-profile local architectural firm to "bring the building into the 21st century." Once complete, the AKM will be a model of environmentally friendly preservation. The main visible change will be the addition of louvers onto the aluminum facade as part of the architect's energy-saving design strategy. While restoration work is going on, performances will be held at the Süreyya Opera House in Kadıköy (p. 229).

Taksim Square. ✆ **0212/251-5600.** www.idobale.com. Tram: Kabataş; Funicular: Taksim; Nostalgic Tramway: Taksim; Metro: Taksim; Bus: 25T, 35C, 40, 54HT, 55T, 61B, 80T, 87, 93T, 96T, 559C, or E50.

Aya Triada Ermeni Katolik Kilisesi The striking presence above Taksim Square of the dome/semidomes of this Armenian Catholic Church was quite revolutionary when the church was built in 1880. Under Ottoman rule, domes were prohibited for use in non-Muslim places of worship. But that all changed during the Tanzimat reforms. The church, which is still in use, is the largest Eastern Orthodox Church in Istanbul. The facade features two symmetrical clock towers, best admired from inside the expansive garden courtyard, where the space is shared with a number of domesticated farm animals and friendly feral cats.

Meşelik Sok., Kurabiye Sok. 2 (next to the side entrance to Hacı Baba Restaurant), Taksim. ✆ **0212/244-1358.** Open for Sun Mass. Off hours, knock and a caretaker may let you in. Tram: Kabataş; Funicular: Taksim; Nostalgic Tramway: Taksim; Metro: Taksim; Bus: 25T, 35C, 40, 54HT, 55T, 61B, 80T, 87, 93T, 96T, 559C, or E50.

Cumhuriyet Anıtı/Republican Monument Punctuating the entrance to Istiklal Caddesi (which means "Independence St.") is this monument to the republic. The sculpture, created by the Italian sculptor Pietro Canonica, symbolizes the War of Independence on one side. The opposite side is a representation of the Republic of Turkey. The monument was erected here in 1928 inside an arched foundation designed by Istanbul-born architect Gulio Mongeri.

Taksim Square. Tram: Kabataş; Funicular: Taksim; Nostalgic Tramway: Taksim; Metro: Taksim; Bus: 25T, 35C, 40, 54HT, 55T, 61B, 80T, 87, 93T, 96T, 559C, or E50.

St. Antoine Italyan Katolik Kilisesi (Italian Catholic Church) Also known as St. Anthony of Padua Franciscan Church, St. Antoine is a spectacular example of Italian neo-Gothic building, dating to 1913. The congregation was established in 1725 in Perşembe Pazarı, in Karaköy, and moved to this spot that same century. Giulio Mongeri, the Istanbul-born architect who created the foundation for the Republican Monument in Taksim Square, laid the foundations for the church in 1906. The church draws standing-room-only crowds at Christmastime.

Istiklal Cad. ✆ **0212/244-0935.** Daily prayer times are posted outside (currently English Mass is held Sat 10am and weekdays 8am and 7pm). Tram: Kabataş; Funicular: Taksim; Nostalgic Tramway; Metro: Taksim; Bus: 25T, 35C, 40, 54HT, 55T, 61B, 80T, 87, 93T, 96T, 559C, or E50.

Taksim Maksemi (Water Distribution) As the first major building to grace Taksim Square, Istanbul's nucleus derives its very name from this octagonal building at the southwest corner of the square. Built by Sultan Mahmut I (1732–33) as a water collection and distribution center for water brought in from reservoirs in the Belgrade Forest, the building is being restored and transformed into the Republic Museum and chronicles, in an area of about 1,000 sq. m (10,765 sq. ft.), Istanbul's contribution to the Republican period. On permanent exhibition are political cartoons, portraits, and period photographs. The museum is also a venue for temporary exhibitions.

Taksim Square. For information, contact the Istanbul Greater Municipality. ✆ **0212/455-1300.** Free Admission. Tram: Kabataş; Funicular: Taksim; Nostalgic Tramway: Taksim; Metro: Taksim; Bus: 25T, 35C, 40, 54HT, 55T, 61B, 80T, 87, 93T, 96T, 559C, or E50.

BEŞIKTAŞ

Naval Museum (Deniz Müz esi) Kids Kids of all ages will be enchanted by this collection of original and model warships, navigational devices, and other tools particular to a naval culture. Keep an eye out for the VIP cabin of the Ertuğrul, used by Atatürk between 1925 and 1937, and a section of the iron chain used in the failed defense of the city, pre-Ottoman conquest. Barbarosa's standard is displayed in a case on the upper floor

of the main building, embroidered with a trifecta of religious symbols (the Trinity, the Star of David, and the names of the first four Caliphs) to emphasize the Ottoman reign (or protection) over all three. A copy of Pirit Reis's map of North America, drawn in the first half of the 15th century, is also here, while the original is housed in Topkapı Palace. In the outbuilding at the back of the museum courtyard is a gallery housing a staggering collection of imperial caiques where you'll find original, and highly ornamental, wooden Sultans' caiques, including the *pièce de résistance:* a 40m-long (131-ft.), 5.7m-wide (19-ft.) beamed boat inlaid with nacre, tortoiseshell, and ivory (so much for animal welfare)—the only original two-masted galley still in existence.

Hayrettin Iskelesi Sok. (at the Beşiktaş ferry landing), Beşiktaş. ✆ **0212/327-4345.** www.denizmuzeleri.tsk.tr/idmk. Wed–Sun 9am–5pm. Admission 3TL. IDO ferry: from Kadıköy or Üsküdar; Bus: 22, 22RE, 25E, 25T, 27E, 28, 28O, 28T, 30A, 30D, 30M, 40, 40B, 40T, 43R, 559C, 57UL, 58N, 58UL, 62, 110, or 112.

SIGHTS ALONG THE BOSPHORUS

For over 2,500 years, kings and commanders have confronted the challenge of the Bosphorus, building rudimentary bridges out of boats and floating jetties to increase the size of their empires. Mandrokles of Samos crossed on huge connecting floats in 512 B.C.; Persian Emperor Xerxes built a temporary bridge, as did Heraclius I of Byzantium, who crossed a chain of pontoons on horseback. Now that several bridges connect the shores of Europe and Asia, staying on the water has become more fashionable than actually crossing it. The shores are dotted with *yalıs,* or classic waterfront mansions, built as early as the 18th century: yellow, pink, and blue wooden palaces perched along the waterfront. The surrounding neighborhoods (best visited by land) retain much of their characteristic village feel, in stark contrast to the restored homes inhabited by the likes of ex-Prime Minister Tansu Çillar.

Cruising up the straits is a bit easier these days than when Jason and the Argonauts sailed through in search of the Golden Fleece. A number of local tour companies organize daylong or half-day boat cruises up the Bosphorus on private boats, often with a stop at the Rumeli Fortress and visits to Beylerbeyi Sarayı. Unless you've gotten a guarantee

Tips Cruising Like a Sultan

A few years ago, an industrious young entrepreneur set a crew of expert craftsmen to replicating a traditional sultan's imperial caique, fake gild, velvet, and all. The result is a kitschy, and yes, delightfully touristy, ride up the Bosphorus the way the royals used to do it. **Sultan Kayıkları** (✆ **0212/268-0299;** www.sultankayiklari.com) has expanded to three motorized boats (the oars are for show) and now operates three different tours. Instead of craning your neck over the side of a crowed clunker, a maximum of 30 passengers each get a front-row seat to the turning of the Ottoman centuries, sea spray and all.

Two of the three tours on offer (the third is a "Palace Tour" for groups) are quick excursions of up to an hour, no stops allowed. Choose between the tour of the Straits from Dolmabahçe to the Bosphorus Bridge and back (58TL) or of the Golden Horn (45TL). Boats depart from different docks and have differing schedules; reservations are required.

that the tour will *not* wind up on one of the public ferries, skip the tour and hop on one of the less-pristine (but serviceable) city ferries and go the route yourself.

A one-way ticket on the **Istanbul Deniz Otobüsleri** ferry (IDO; ✆ **0212/444-4436** toll-free in Istanbul; www.ido.com.tr) costs 13TL (round-trip is 20TL). The ferry makes stops at all of the main docks on both the European and Asian sides (10 each), giving passengers the option of jumping ship early. **Sarıyer** is the most visited stop—and therefore the most touristy, but the potential for a side trip to the **Sadberk Hanım Museum,** Büyükdere Piyasa Cad. 27–29, Sarıyer (✆ **0212/242-3813;** www.sadberkhanimmuzesi.org.tr; Thurs–Tues 10am–5pm; admission 7TL), continues to make this disembarkation point one of the most popular. The museum, located in an old Ottoman house overlooking a section of the Bosphorus that was an old dockyard, houses a limited but excellent collection of artifacts representative of the progression of civilizations in Anatolia. If you're already up here, then it's worth a look; otherwise, you'll get a more comprehensive presentation of the same themes at the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara.

A lesser-appreciated alternative (though still touristy) is to get off at **Anadolu Kavağı** instead, hike up the hill to the "Crusader's Castle"—named for a carved cross decoration dating to the crusader invasion but actually a Byzantine structure used as a Genoese Palace in the 14th century—and enjoy outstanding views of the European side and lunch at one of the many fish restaurants.

Avoid the crush and disembark at one of the lesser-visited (for now) villages such as Emirgan, Bebek, Kanlıca, and Çengelköy; then either catch a direct ferry back or wait for the return of the ferry you started on (departs Anadolu Kavağı at 3pm year-round and at 5pm in summer as well).

The trip by sea from Eminönü (departures at 10:35am, winter only, and 1:35pm; the ferry makes a stop in Beşiktaş approx. 15 min. later) to the last stop at Anadolu Kavağı takes 2 hours (allow 6 hr. for the full round-trip excursion), with only two return departures leaving at 3 and 5pm. This schedule pretty much restricts the amount of jumping on and off you can realistically do in a day. If you're short on time, IDO now offers a nonstop Sunday excursion departing Eminönü at 2pm. The boat plies the Bosphorus all the way up to Çubuklu and Istinye, before turning around and making its way back to the Eminönü 2 hours later. Tickets cost 10TL. Alternatively, you can take an IDO commuter ferry from any of a number of wharfs around the city to the destination on the Bosphorus of your choice for 1.50TL. See the map on the inside back cover of this book for ferry and sea bus lines.

Rumeli Fortress (Rumeli Hisarı) This citadel was built by Mehmet the Conqueror across from the Anatolia Fortress (Anadolu Hisarı) in preparation for what was to be the seventh and final Ottoman siege of the fortified Byzantine city. Constructed in only 4 months, the fortress served to cut off Black Sea traffic in and out of the city, together with the Anadolu Hisarı built by his great-grandfather across the Bosphorus on the Asian shores. The Ottoman army eventually penetrated the city by carrying the Turkish galleons over land by way of a sled and pulley system, and dropping them into the Golden Horn and behind the city's defenses.

Tarabya Yeniköy Cad. north of Sarıyer (some ferries make the stop at Rumeli Kavağı; otherwise, get off at Sarıyer and take a *dolmuş* the rest of the way). ✆ **0212/263-5305.** www.kultur.gov.tr. Admission 3TL. Tues–Sun 9am–5pm. Bus: 25E or 40.

Sabancı Museum in Emirgan A favorite of Istanbul's educated class is the private fine arts museum of Sabancı University. The building, which sits high above a sloping lawn on the upper Bosphorus, began its long journey into the 21st century as the private

residence of Ismael Paşa, *Khedive,* or governor, of Egypt. Throughout the 19th century and into the early 20th, it served as the embassy of Karadağ until the *khedive*'s grandson, Prince Mehmet Ali Hassan, brought it back into his family in 1923. In 1951, the patriarch of the Sabancı dynasty, Hacı Ömer, acquired the property and added the bronze statue of a horse as an advance guard. (It is popularly known as the Atlı Kösk, or Horse Pavilion; I had no knowledge of this when I started calling it the Horse House several years ago.)

Although it opened in 2002, the hosting of three extremely high-profile (and expertly marketed) exhibits put it squarely on the international map. These were exhibitions of works by Picasso and Rodin and an installation commemorating the 800-year anniversary of Genghis Khan. But the permanent collection of Ottoman and Turkish fine arts itself is enough to entice all but a casual, crunched-for-time visitor to Istanbul (it's about a 30-min. bus ride from Taksim). Priceless Chinese, French, and German porcelains, calligraphic items spanning 500 years of Ottoman art, paintings and portraiture (special attention to those by Osman Hamdi), and historical photographs fill the expanses. There's also a section on decorative arts and furniture, and one featuring ornamental marble and stone sculptures.

Sakıp Sabancı Cad. 22, Emirgan. ✆ **0212/277-2200.** http://muze.sabanciuniv.edu. Admission 10TL. Tues and Thurs–Sun 10am–6pm; Wed till 10pm. Closed Jan 1, Ramadan, and Kurban Bayramı. Bus: 22, 22RE, 25E, 40, 40T, or 42T to Çinaraltı.

11 THE ASIAN SIDE

The Asian side (referring primarily to the districts abutting the Bosphorus) is a quiet and predominantly upper-class residential area short (but not completely devoid) of historical interest and heavy on views. Many visitors combine a Bosphorus cruise (see "Sights Along the Bosphorus," above) or a day trip to **Beylerbeyı Sarayı** (p. 161), the summer palace of the sultans, with lunch at one of the more charming boat landings (**Anadolu Hisarı, Çengelköy,** famous for its cucumbers and persimmons, **Kanlıca,** where people flock for yogurt from heaven, or Paşalimanı), or perhaps a walk up to Çamlıca Hill for a panorama of both the Marmara and Black seas. But because it's a good 22-plus km (14 miles) to cover the entire length of the Bosphorus from Anadolu Kavağı to Kadıköy, anyone wishing to spend a day in Istanbul in Asia is going to have to make some tough choices. To get the best out of a day (or half-day) trip over, plan to tackle one or two neighborhoods in relative proximity.

The district **Üsküdar** has the densest collection of architecturally outstanding mosques, monuments, and synagogues, while **Kadıköy** bustles with a market center, a Tuesday bazaar, an opera house, and some seriously good *lokantas.* The tree-lined shopping section along **Bağdat Caddesi** is frequently touted as a destination, but frankly has nothing exceptional to offer a foreigner accustomed to a cosmopolitan shopping day out.

A LOOK AT THE PAST

Chrysopolis (City of Gold) was a suburb of ancient Calcedonia (modern **Kadıköy**). Its history parallels that of Byzantium, but because it was geographically vulnerable to a long parade of armies with ambition, none of the monuments to this era remain.

Chrysopolis was the site of Constantine's final and victorious battle over Licinius in A.D. 324. The city fell to the Persians in A.D. 626, and in turn to the Arabs in A.D. 710 and A.D. 782, but none of these raiding armies succeeded in taking Constantinople,

protected behind high defensive walls on the other side of the Bosphorus. Later, it was from here in 1204 that the Crusaders launched their successful attack on the city.

After retaking Constantinople, several Byzantine emperors were forced to hunker down here in the palace of Scutarion (from Scutarion, it's not a far journey until you get the name Üsküdar), the location of which remains unknown. Today, **Üsküdar** is a commercial and residential suburb of Istanbul, mostly populated by conservative-minded Turks drawn to the density of mosques located here. During Ottoman times, the main Square of the Falconers was the departure point for the imperial caravan as it set out on its annual pilgrimage to Mecca. The sights selected for inclusion here are the bare-bones highlights of the neighborhood and are all within easy reach of the Üsküdar ferry landing.

ÜSKÜDAR

Büyük and Küçük Çamlıca Many a local suggests that visitors trek to the top of **Çamlıca Hill,** the highest point in Istanbul and famed for its sweeping views over the historic peninsula as far as the Princes' Islands and north to the Black Sea. In fact there are two hills, Büyük (big) and Küçük (little) Çamlıca, the former swathed in pines and punctuated by restaurants and cafes (because they're run by the municipality, they don't serve alcohol) and the latter mostly residential. During the era of Sultan Murad IV, the pastoral and piney hills served the sultan and his nobles as a royal hunting ground, and a number of palaces (mostly wooden and no longer extant) were constructed here.

Ferry from Beşiktaş or Eminönü to Üsküdar then bus 11C from in front of Üsküdar Camii to the Nurbaba Sok. stop (25 min.) or by taxi (4km/2½ miles).

Çinili Camii This mosque was built for the Valide Sultan Kösem, mother of Murad IV, in 1640. This simple square-planned mosque is entirely reveted, both inside and out, in precious Iznik tiles. The porch and minaret are baroque additions.

At the corner of Çinili Mescit Sok. and Çavuşdere Cad. IDO ferry: from Karaköy to Kadıköy or from Beşiktaş or Eminönü to Üsküdar, and then bus no. 110, 120, 127, 12A, 13, 13B, 14, 14D, 15F, or 500A.

Leander's Tower (the Maiden's Tower or Kız Kulesi) Rising from a rock at the mouth of the Bosphorus is the Kız Kulesi, built by Ibrahim Paşa in 1719 over the remains of a fortress built by Mehmet the Conqueror and of the earliest original building constructed on the rock by Byzantine Emperor Manuel Comnenus I. The romance of the tower finds its root in an ancient myth along the lines of Romeo and Juliet: boy (Leander) falls in love with girl (the Aphrodite priestess Hero); boy drowns swimming to meet girl; girl finds lover's corpse; girl commits suicide. The story originated around the Dardanelles, but was too juicy not to attach to this solitary tower. Legend also has it that the tower was connected to the mainland by way of an underwater tunnel, and that there used to be a wall between the tower and the shore—a rumor not altogether implausible considering that, according to a 19th-century historian, the remains of a wall could be seen in calm water.

Since as early as the 1600s, the tower has been used as a prison and a quarantine hospital. The tower is currently in service as a (mediocre, overpriced) panoramic restaurant and tea lounge. Take advantage of the free shuttle over (evenings only; daytime fare is 5TL).

Slightly offshore south of Üsküdar, on the Asian side. ✆ **0212/727-4095.** www.kizkulesi.com.tr. Ferry from Kabataş (farthest dock to the north) hourly Mon–Fri noon–6:45pm and weekends 9am–6:45pm. 5TL daytime; free evenings.

Moments Yogurt of the Gods

It's a long way to go for a cup of yogurt, but I'm glad (after several years of pining) I did. The **Tarıhı Kanlıca Yoğurdu** has been churning out this creamy ambrosia since 1893. For a few TL, you can get a 200-gram (small) serving; sprinkle some confectionary sugar atop each bite for a decadent (or healthy, depending on how you look at it) treat. Open daily 8am to 11pm.

Hop on the Bosphorus cruise boat at Eminönü (departures at 10:35am and 1:35pm in summer) or at any stop along the route on its way up the Bosphorus. (See p. 45 for departure times or www.ido.com.tr.) Or take a ferry from Eminönü, Karaköy, or Beşiktaş to Üsküdar and take bus no. 15 or 15P north along the Bosphorus road to Kanlıca.

Mihrimah C amii, aka Isk ele C amii or M ihrimah Sultan C amii Sinan was around 40 years old when he built this mosque complex for Mihrimah Sultan, the daughter of Süleyman the Magnificent and wife of Rüstem Paşa. It was his second imperial commission after becoming Chief Architect, a post he earned thanks to the great civil engineering works he created while serving in the Ottoman army. In the design of the mosque, Sinan reinterpreted the theme of the square-based plan surmounted by a single dome by transferring the weight-bearing responsibilities from the four walls to an innovative system comprised of four arches and four pendatives. The central dome of the mosque is supported not by two or four semidomes, but three. This transfer of weight freed the walls to sustain a lacework of rosette and arched windows, allowing a flood of light into the interior space. The baroque-style minaret dates to the 19th century. At the base of the mosque is another baroque work, the monumental Ahmet II Fountain, built in 1728 by Sultan Ahmet III for his mother, who is buried in Üsküdar. A calligraphic poem by the sultan is inscribed on the side facing the sea, with his signature below.

Üsküdar ferry landing. No phone. IDO ferry: from Beşiktaş or Eminönü.

KADIKÖY

Selimiye Barracks/Florence Nightingale Museum Security is stiff at the First Army Command Post headquarters, so a visit to the building's main attraction, the Florence Nightingale Museum, won't be easy. The museum is located in the North Tower (although no one is certain which of the two towers actually housed her rooms) and commemorates the aid and comfort she and her nurses gave, in the face of demoralizing mortality rates, to the wounded and dying British soldiers of the Crimean War. The building itself is unremarkable although it has a strong presence—an elongated rectangle punctuated with two towers. It was constructed by Mahmut II to house the new troops he intended to take the place of the overly dominant and rebellious Janissary Corps. Adjacent to the barracks is a small mosque built by Selim III (an earlier wooden barracks preceded the one that Mahmut II built).

Selimiye Kislası Haydarpaşa. ✆ **0216/343-7310.** Appointments must be made at least 48 hr. in advance for visits Mon–Fri 9am–4pm. Free admission. IDO ferry: from Karaköy to Kadıköy.

LIBRARIES & CULTURAL CENTERS

The **British Council,** Posta Kutusu, Beşiktaş (✆ **0212/355-5657;** www.britishcouncil.org.tr; Tues–Fri 10am–5pm, Sat 9:30am–2:30pm), is one of a global network of British Councils working to connect people with learning opportunities and creative ideas from the U.K. via courses in English, educational exchange, and special events. The library is one of the best resources for multilingual information on antiquities in Turkey, as well as a great reference center for translations of Turkish literary works. They have a huge collection of English-language books, in addition to CDs, music, and videos. The center is popular with students of the English language. Its American counterpart is the **American**

Salve for the Turkish Soul: Istanbul's Spas

Who knew that on top of the remnants of antiquity, beyond a coastline baked by a glorious Mediterranean climate, besides a wealth of pastoral landscapes and traditional villages, above the cosmopolitan skylines, and outside of a delectable kitchen, that Turkey, with a claim to more than 1,000 thermal springs, benefits from a geothermal cacophony of self-indulgence. Sitting atop its own tectonic rift, the province of Istanbul is no exception, if you're willing to travel the hour or more to reach the thermal springs of Tuzla or soak in the Çekirge springs in Bursa. But the absence of its own homegrown thermal bubbly, Turkey's Gotham provides a respectable alternative in the form of deluxe spas and wellness centers with custom services for men, women, and couples.

If it's an exclusive, sublime, and decadent experience you're after, the **Caudelie Vinotherapie Spa at Les Ottomans,** Muallim Naci Cad. 68, Kuruçeşme (✆ **0212/359-1500;** www.lesottomans.com), is hands down the winner. Fragrant with orchids and lavender, clients drift pleasurably from able to abler hands, limp from a friction merlot scrub or a grape-seed and essential oil corporal massage, followed by a timeless moment in the light therapeutic meditation room, or the aromatically healing steam room, or the relaxation-stimulating cool room. Before you know it, a whole afternoon has passed by, and you feel delightfully intoxicated and rejuvenated.

If the spa at Les Ottomans rates up there with the Sultan's treatment, the **Sanitas Spa at the Çırağan Palace,** Çırağan Cad. 32, Beşiktaş (✆ **0212/326-4646;** www.kempinski-istanbul.com), would be targeting the Valide Sultan, or queen mother. While not as elitist, the Sanitas Spa is at least as exclusive, and for 40 ever-so-brief moments, I indeed felt like royalty under the servile hands of my *hamam* masseuse. Opt for the four-handed ayurvedic energy balance massage or the Indochine body package of effleurages, Western kneading, Cleopatra milk bath, Japanese percussion, Thai stretching, and Indian Rubbing and I guarantee you will also sprout a virtual crown.

Research Institute in Turkey, Üvez Sok. 5, Arnavutköy (✆ **0212/257-8111;** http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/ARIT; Mon–Fri 9:30am–6pm; appointments recommended).

For books and historical documents on Istanbul, the Turkish Touring and Automobile Club runs the **Istanbul Library,** located in one of the old Ottoman houses it restored on Soğukçeşme Sokağı in Sultanahmet (✆ **0212/512-5730;** Mon–Fri 9am–noon; 1:30–5pm).

The **Istanbul Archaeology Museum** (p. 136) has a library of over 60,000 volumes on archaeology and will be opened upon request. Two other archaeology-centric research centers are at the **Dutch History and Archaeology Institute Library,** Istiklal Cad. 393 (✆ **0212/293-9283**), and the **German Archaeology Institute Library,** Ayazpaşa Cami Sok. 48, Gümüşsuyu (✆ **0212/244-0714**).

Alas, Istanbul clientele being as demanding as it is, the list of über-luxe spas seems to go on and on. At the **Ritz-Carlton's Laveda Spa,** Askerocağı Cad. 15, Şişli (✆ **0212/334-4444;** www.ritzcarlton.com), you can choose among Caviar Therapy and Citrus Detox Reviver, or opt for the Sultan's royal Six-Hand Massage, and you can avail of these services alfresco in summer in one of the treatment areas overlooking the visually soothing Bosphorus Straits. Couples can treat each other to the Gift of Bacchus, a veritable cornucopia of wine-grape treatments capitalizing on the antioxidant properties of polyphenol. At the **Four Seasons The Bosphorus,** Çırağan Cad. 28, Beşiktaş (✆ **0212/381-4160**), Monte Carlo Glamour and Detox Cote D'Azur treatments illustrate the target audience of this luxury spa. Treatments run the gamut from anti-aging scrubs and facials, through to slimming or soothing massages.

As if wine baths, grape massages, and caviar rubs weren't enough, the self-indulgent can sample the latest trend in body massage: the body coffee rub or body-stimulating coffee wrap at the **Sanda Spa** (locations at the Hillside City Club in Etiler ✆ **0212/352-2500,** in Istinye ✆ **0212/367-2060** and on the Asian side in Kozyatağı ✆ **0216/472-0072;** www.sandaspa.com). Treatments employ only cream-of-the-crop products, from the exclusive Murad, to Elemis anti-aging serums, to the Body Coffee line of products. The **Taylife Spa at the Sofa Hotel,** Teşvikiye Cad. 123, Nişantaşı (✆ **0212/368-1818;** www.thesofahotel.com), is another oasis of relaxation and rejuvenation in the heart of Istanbul's trendiest quarter. Treatments center around detox and wellness, with a menu that includes balneotherapy, ayurvedic massage, and stress-removal programs.

Admittedly, even a brief visit to one of these mini-vacation spots will stretch the wallet, but if you can find a balance, the experience is most certainly worth it, particularly if you've got your eye on the personalized *hamam* treatment—a sumptuous alternative to a short trip to the albeit historic neighborhood *hamam*. (For more information on the *hamam* experience, see p. 152.)

ESPECIALLY FOR KIDS

Even though Turks are notorious pushovers for their children, Istanbul isn't really a kid-friendly destination; even the most privileged and well-educated children will get bored trudging around the recesses of ancient Byzantium. Istanbul does have a series of kid-related cultural events, though, including the **Rahmi M. Koç Museum,** Hasköy Cad. 5 (✆ **0212/369-6600;** www.rmk-museum.org.tr), a hands-on series of exhibitions a la the Smithsonian in the United States showcasing the history of human ingenuity in the areas of transportation, industry, and communications. The transparent washing machines, carburetors, decommissioned submarine bridge, trains, and aircraft will definitely push the buttons of any preteen boy (and then some) and are definitely worth a visit. The addition of the planetarium lets the viewer "live the experience of the cosmos in a virtual environment." (Advance reservation is required.) Admission is 10TL for adults (5TL for students) plus an additional 4TL (3TL students) for entry to the submarine exhibit (children 7 and under not allowed) and 5TL (3TL students) for the planetarium. The museum is open Tuesday to Friday 10am to 5pm, Saturday and Sunday 10am to 7pm.

The **Museum of Energy at SantralIstanbul** ★ (p. 167) is a real educational hoot. Set in the old Silahtarağa electric plant, kids can climb up the steel stairs to the control room, get a close-up look at some seriously huge turbines, and pedal an exercise bike rigged to generate power to a radio and a hair dryer. The museum has 21 other cool interactive hands-on displays that show you how power is generated. Admission to the Museum of Energy is included in the 7TL price of admission to the Main Galleries, or free on its own.

Miniaturk, Imrahor Cad., Sütlüce (on the eastern banks of the Golden Horn opposite Eyüp; ✆ **0212/222-2882;** www.miniaturk.com.tr), which opened in 2003, is an open-air mini-museum sprouting models of Turkey's most-loved monuments reconstructed here at 1/25th of their actual size. The park is open from 9am to 5pm in winter, later in summer. Admission is 10TL.

Kids will probably be excited to scale the ramparts of the fortresses at **Rumeli Hisarı** (p. 184) or **Yedikule** (p. 166).

If a day trip to the Princes' Islands was not on your to-do list, you may want to add **Büyükada** (preferably in warmer weather; the islands become dreary ghost towns in the fall and winter; p. 249) so that your progeny can hoist themselves onto one of the horse-drawn carriages waiting for them at the other end of the ferry. As a pedestrian island, these carriages are the main mode of transport. You can also take a donkey ride up to the Aya Yorgi Church and views of the Marmara Sea that even teenagers can appreciate.

SPECTATOR SPORTS

To say that **soccer** is a popular national sport in Turkey is to miss the point entirely. Soccer is closer to a religious experience; club rivalries are waged with an intensity comparable to the holy wars.

The three main soccer clubs in Istanbul are **Fenerbahçe, Beşiktaş,** and **Galatasaray.** Main matches are played nights at 7pm from late August to May. (A few late-summer matches are played at 8pm.) Home matches are played every other week at **Inönü Stadium,** above Dolmabahçe Palace, for Beşiktaş; at **Alisami Yen,** in Mecediyeköy, for Galatasaray; and at **Fenerbahçe Stadium,** near Kadıköy on the Asian side, for Fenerbahçe. Tickets run from 55TL to 350TL and are available at the stadium the day of a match, or through **Biletix** (www.biletix.com).

8

Istanbul Strolls

This chapter is designed to accommodate the traveling interests of first-time visitors with limited time as well as those with a bit more flexibility in their schedules, or repeat guests to Istanbul. You might consider the walking tour of Galata as the logical end to a stroll down Istiklal Caddesi, which is for all intents and purposes the outer fringes of the old neighborhood of Galata. As Ottoman Istanbul's original melting pot, Galata is a hybrid mosaic of the various components of Levantine commerce. The second tour is a whimsical walk through the streets of the Historic Peninsula. A mainstream walking tour of these neighborhoods seemed beside the point, given that you can't swing a cat without grazing a monumental open-air artifact. Instead, this tour weaves you through streets you may have overlooked, so that on your way to visiting the Byzantine cisterns, vaulted crypts, and ancient foundations of Istanbul underground, it will be possible to hone in on the main attractions as well. Finally, I've created a tour for those interested in going off the proverbial beaten path. While the neighborhoods of Balat and Fener, along the Golden Horn, were built by the Byzantines, traipsed over by the Crusaders, and reinvented by Greeks, Jews, and Ottomans, for decades these narrow streets crumbled into obscurity. Only in recent years has local government and even UNESCO taken interest in the significant cultural and historical sites that compose the walls, floors, markets, and backdrop of today's working-class Muslim neighborhood. On this tour you'll see all the extremes of Istanbul's historic sites: from exquisitely preserved gilded churches and tiled mosques, to restoration works in progress, to piles of rubble left from a glorious past.

WALKING TOUR 1 GALATA

START:	**(Upper) Tünel Meydanı**
FINISH:	**(Lower) Tünel Entrance**
TIME:	**90 minutes (about 2km; about 1⅓ miles)**
BEST TIME:	**Any time in full daylight. To bask in the flurry of humanity, approach this tour during morning or evening rush hour. For those wishing to combine the tour with the performance of the Whirling Dervişes at the Galata Mevlevihanesi, you'll have to start the tour at the end and work your way backward, in order to enjoy this walk in full daylight. Although it's pretty safe, you don't really want to be wandering around here at night.**
WORST TIME:	**Any day that it's raining (streets are slippery). Sunday will see Bankalar Sokağı (Voyvoda Caddesi) completely deserted.**

A stroll through Galata will take you through one of Istanbul's historically most diverse neighborhoods. This hilly section was once the commercial hub of the Ottoman Empire, thanks to communities of enterprising immigrants from Europe and Armenia who had been granted permission to conduct business here in the 13th century. Although this neighborhood suffered decline and neglect throughout the 20th century, today it is enjoying a revitalization, as sidewalk cafes, art galleries, and small shops pull ever more foot traffic up and down these nostalgic streets.

To save those of you based in the Old City the effort of trekking up the steep streets that lead uphill to the Galata Tower, this walk begins at the entrance to Tünel at the end of Istiklal and works its way down to the Galata Bridge. For those holing up in Beyoğlu or along the Bosphorus, simply make your way down to the Tünel end of Istiklal Caddesi to begin this tour. (For those ready, willing, and even eager to trek uphill, this tour can also be followed from finish to start.)

Begin in the Tünel station.

❶ Metro Han

Our tour begins at the entrance to the world's third-oldest underground train (construction was completed in 1876; only New York's and London's are older). It's actually an underground funicular connecting "Upper Tünel" to the streets at the base of this steeply sloped hill surrounding "Lower Tünel." Locals just call them both Tünel, and you're left to work out which one they mean. With only one stop, this is the world's shortest line, facilitating the commute for more than a century's worth of daily commuters forced to haul themselves up and down the hill you are about to descend on foot.

Outside the entrance to Tünel is the terminus of the **Nostalgic Tramway.** Trolley cars replaced the horse-drawn carriage in Istanbul in 1869. Service connecting Tünel and Taksim was only added a few years later, as part of a much longer tramway line. All of Istanbul's tramways were decommissioned by the mid-1960s, but in 1990, the current system running the length of Istiklal Caddesi was inaugurated. It's practical, touristy, and truly charming: two cars ply the 1,640m (just over a mile) track 40 times per day for a total of 23,944km (14,878 miles) per year.

Opposite the entrance to Tünel on the other side of the tramway tracks is the entrance to the Tünel Pasajı, a neoclassical-style arcade enclosed by three separate buildings. The passageway is one of the more atmospheric spots in Beyoğlu, even if the rare-book and antiques dealers have ceded to the trendier (and higher-grossing) cafes. Facing the entrance to Tünel, go right onto the continuation of Istiklal Cad., now named:

❷ Galip Dede Caddesi

At one time, this street, which goes by its original name of **Yüksek Kaldırım** south of the Galata Tower, wound its way down the slopes of Galata all the way to the Golden Horn. Yüksek Kaldırım, meaning "High Sidewalk," was originally the main bustling thoroughfare of neighborhood Greeks, Armenians, French, Jewish, and Ottoman merchants and a thriving center for publishing and booksellers. The street is (steeply) sloped rather than stepped as it was a hundred years ago—the characteristic cobblestones have been replaced with modern, evenly surfaced bricks, and hardware vendors are being replaced by smarter shops. Yet the essential nostalgia of the street can still be felt through the soul of now-soot-filled buildings standing vigil over a new guard of preoccupied pedestrians. **Librairie de Pera,** one of the oldest booksellers in Istanbul, is located at no. 22.

A few steps down Galip Dede Cad. on your left is the entrance to the 500-year-old:

❸ Galata Mevlevihanesi

This was the first and most important derviş lodge in Istanbul. If you time your walking tour right (see "See the Whirling Dervişes," in chapter 7), you can immerse yourself in the ritual *sema,* performed by the Lovers of Mevlana Foundation, in the extremely atmospheric octagonal wooden *semahane,* modestly embellished with calligraphy and exhibiting musical instruments, manuscripts, and other items related to the Mevlevi Order. For more on the lodge, see p. 178.

As you continue your descent, you will pass dusty shops, the occasional grocer, musical instrument stores, and a few newcomers, including an organic cosmetics store and a gag-gift shop called Disturbed People. **Teutonia,** at no. 85, is the German Club founded in 1847, which served as a Nazi propaganda center during World War II. Today, Teutonia houses a German cultural center with events organized by, among others, the Goethe Institute and the nearby German School.

Continue down Galip Dede Cad. to the junction of Yüksek Kaldırım, and an open plaza.

4 Galata Meydanı

Galip Dede Caddesi spills out into the mouth of a small open plaza crowned by the medieval **Galata Tower** and encircled by an almost traffic-free street. The plaza is a brick-and-concrete living room to the neighborhood, where young boys kick around a football, old men contemplate life while seated on a park bench, stray dogs laze, and locals relax at the tea garden down the steps to the left of the tower.

The origins of Galata Tower date back to the 5th or 6th century A.D., but the tower that stands today is a 14th-century reconstruction by the Genoese, built in appreciation of Michael VIII Palaeologus, who granted special permission to allow them to settle the area of Galata. One condition of the agreement was that the Genoese were prohibited from putting up

any defensive walls, a ban they unceremoniously ignored. A short set of partial wraparound steps provides access to the elevator to the top of the tower; admission costs 8TL; but frankly, the city is so full of vantage points for stunning views that this one isn't a must-see.

TAKE A BREAK

You can stop here for a respite at the enclosed rooftop restaurant of the **Anemon Galata Hotel** (at the base of the tower at Büyükhendek Cad. 11; see p. 86), which has a full menu of Turkish cuisine and a decent wine list, all with a front-and-center view of the upper stories of the tower—so close you can even see the imperfections in the tooling. Or, for a more relaxed experience, a farther 5 minutes or so on you can also pop up to the Galata Konak rooftop cafe/patisserie for sweeping views of the rooftops and the sea. Stay tuned, below.

Keeping the Anemon Galata Hotel on your left, follow Büyük Hendek Cad. until you approach, on your left:

5 The Neve Shalom Synagogue

For some reason, Jews visiting Istanbul almost invariably want to see this site, though this is neither the most beautiful nor the only synagogue in town. Greater Istanbul is home to a total of 17 synagogues, many of them open to visitors willing to jump through advance-notice security hoops, and Neve Shalom is no exception. To visit, you will have to call in advance and fax over a copy of your passport. Built on the former site of a primary school in the late 1930s to accommodate a growing population of Jews, Neve Shalom's claim to "fame" is three terrorist bombings, on September 6, 1986; March 1, 1992; and November 15, 2003; the latter attack coordinated with attacks on another synagogue, and 5 days later, on the British Consulate and the HSBC Bank. Of the 27 people killed in the attack, all but six were congregants. Al Qaeda claimed responsibility soon after the bombings. By the way, Neve Shalom translates as "Oasis of Peace."

Backtrack to the Galata Tower and through the plaza and continue straight into the little alley-like Camekan Sok., a characteristic cobbled lane flanked by one or two pre-gentrified bars. Follow Camekan Sok. around to the right and down the sloping street to the next intersection with Bereketzade Camii and Hacı Ali soks.

6 Beyoğlu Hospital

Founded during the Crimean War by the British government to care for British seamen, this building was constructed in 1904 and designed by Percy Adams (the architect credited with the design of the Senate House at the University of London). The tower provided a clear sightline to incoming ships, allowing for hospital staff to get advance warning of any major illnesses on board. In 1924, just after the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the British handed the hospital over to the Red Crescent.

TAKE A BREAK

Across the street from the hospital and diagonally opposite the little mosque is a small residential building at no. 2. Take the elevator to the top floor where you'll find the **Galata Konak** rooftop patisserie and cafe (Bereket Zade Mah. Hacı Ali Sok. 2, Galata; ✆ **0212/252-5346**).

Exiting the patisserie, turn right. You are now following Hacı Ali Sok. around and down yet another one of Galata's treacherous inclines. About 76m (250 ft.), about three-fourths of the way down the street and at the top of the brick staircase, is a white building with red trim:

7 The Camondo House

As a prominent 19th-century Jewish Galata banker, as well as a banker to the Ottoman government, Avram Camondo lived in this house. Camondo, who also

held Venetian citizenship, was an exceptional philanthropist, and his gifts to Italian charities earned him the title of Count, bestowed upon him by King Victor Emanuel. In his own backyard (that is, in Constantinople), Camondo founded a school in the poorest section of the city. He also established a council to introduce reforms into the administration of the Jewish community, a move that provoked the conservative Jewish establishment to excommunicate him. He eventually died in Paris but was buried in the Camondo family plot in Hasköy (along the Golden Horn). His mansion is now the Galata Residence, a long-stay hotel. (I stayed in the annex above the outdoor staircase and purposely omitted it from this book.) The ruins in front of the building are what's left of the neighborhood ***mikva,*** the ritual bath serving the Jewish community. The ruins are in a terrible state; it's now a playground and haven for a family of neighborhood cats.

Continue along Felek Sok. with the Camondo House/ Galata Residence on your right. Near the end of the street on your left is the:

❽ Schneidertempel

When built in 1894 for a working-class and tradesmen community of Ashkenazi Jews, this synagogue was called the Tofre Begadim or Tailor's Synagogue. In 1998, the Ashkenazim Cultural Association converted it into the Schneidertempel Art Center, a gallery for contemporary art exhibits, including Biennial exhibitions. The gallery is open to the public during runs of these art shows.

Turn left and go down the steep Bereketzade Medresesi Sok. (the continuation of Camekan Sok.). The Gaudí-esque staircase at the base of this street is the:

❾ Camondo Staircase

Another one of the many structures in the neighborhood built by Avram Camondo, this staircase provided convenient passage for the banker as he made his way from his home to work on Bankalar Sokağı (Bank St.) at the base of the stairs.

Instead of going down the staircase (you'll return later in this tour), go to your right down Kart Çinar Sok. At the intersection with Galata Kulesi Sok. (also known as Kuledibi) is the back of:

❿ Bereket Han

You are standing at the back entrance to probably the most historically significant building in all of Galata. Built in 1316 after the Great Fire of 1315, the Bereket Han occupies the site of the Podestà, or Palazzo del Comune—essentially the town hall—of the Genoese community. In the 19th century, the building underwent numerous modifications, including removal of a grand marble entry staircase and portions of the building facing the street—to accommodate the Voyvoda Street (Bankalar Sok.) tramway. Yet some of the building's earliest elements are still visible: The original rear walls and sections of the side walls are part of the 1316 construction. You can see a small Genoese coat of arms above the rear entrance. Inside is another, though it is thought to be a copy of a preexisting emblem.

In the Genoese building across the street from Bereket Han is the **Galata Derneği,** a cultural center. If it's open, go up the stairs to the loft beneath a hidden treasure—a restored brick vaulted ceiling.

Back on the street, turn right and haul yourself up the steep incline. Just up the street on your left, in a little crook in the sidewalk, is the pink-and-purple doorway and entrance to the:

⓫ Church of SS. Peter and Paul

Knock on the door and the caretaker will let you in. See p. 181 for more on this Franciscan church. Up the hill a few steps on your right is the Old English Jail, expertly converted from a consular place of incarceration to the clubby **Galata House** restaurant (p. 116).

Retrace your steps and follow the street until it ramps down to Bankalar Sok., today better known as:

⓬ Voyvoda Caddesi

It's impossible to overstate the centrality of this street in the financial and mercantile activities conducted during the Ottoman Empire. In the waning years of the empire, which was plagued by a hemorrhaging of economic influence, the sultan turned to many a bank on Bankalar Sokağı for credit—provided at crushing rates of interest. More on these banks and the buildings that housed them later.

Continue straight down Perşembe Pazarı Sok., and turn right onto narrow Galata Mahkemesi Sok., where you will soon see the tower of:

⓭ Arap Camii

This Gothic structure was most likely built as a Dominican church in the first half of the 14th century, incorporating (or including, no one is sure) a chapel dedicated to St. Paul. The church was taken over by a community of Moors who had been expelled from Spain in the 16th century. The building suffered from numerous fires; during the 1913–1919 restoration project, the original flooring was uncovered, revealing a number of Genoese tombstones (now in the Archaeology Museum).

Head back up Perşembe Sok., back to Bankalar Sok., and turn right, where you'll see the beginning of a long parade of stately bank buildings.

⓮ Voyvoda Caddesi 43–45

These two structures predate (and survive) the building boom of the 1890s. Their modest, four-story construction, contrasted against the grandeur of the neighboring bank mansions, provides some insight into the early texture of the neighborhood.

Farther on along Voyvoda/Bankalar Sok. is the unmistakably grand:

⓯ Ottoman Bank

Built in 1890–1892 by architect Alexandre Vallauri, this is actually two buildings in one—twin structures occupied by the Ottoman Bank and later by the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey. In 1896, a group of nationalist Armenians stormed the building with bombs and a list of grievances against the Ottoman state. There's as unexpected (and free) exhibit chronicling the history of the Ottoman Bank, where you can venture into the various vaults containing crumbling bank notes and ledgers of financial transactions.

At this point, you see the Camondo Staircase. You can climb it, turn right, and then right again down the steps back down to Bankalar Sok., or you can simply continue straight along Bankalar Sok. toward:

⓰ Karaköy Square

Some impressive architectural jewels, like the Nordstern Han to your right and the neoclassical Ziraat Bank building opposite the square, command this open plaza, attesting to this section of the city as the center of commerce for not only an empire but for the entire Mediterranean. Turn right onto the square and meander past the *simitçi* (a vendor selling bagel-like sesame rings), the plumbing vendors, and the crush of humanity; then turn right again onto the busy Tersane Caddesi.

Take a right onto the tiny Perçemli Sok., and follow it all the way to the end, where you will find the:

⓱ Jewish Museum of Turkey (Zulfaris Museum)

This museum chronicles 500 years of Turkish Jewry (p. 148). The elegant red-brick town house embellished by marble columns and an ornamental staircase dates to the early 19th century.

Head down to Tersane Cad., and at your right a few steps farther on you will arrive at the entrance to "Lower Tünel." This is the end of the tour, a convenient stop for those heading either back up to Tünel, or, via the tramway, to Taksim or the Old City.

START:	**Yerebatan Sarnıçı (Basilica Cistern), Sultanahmet**
FINISH:	**Istiklal Caddesi, Beyoğlu**
TIME:	**2 to 4 hours, depending on how much time you spend in the Mosaic Museum and in the Basilica Cistern**
BEST TIME:	**Midafternoon Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday**
WORST TIME:	**Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday (when at least one of the destinations mentioned in this tour is closed)**

Istanbul sits atop a mind-boggling wealth of significant ancient and Ottoman history. A few of the places featured here have been converted into restaurants, while others are preserved as museums. Some are both, while others are neither. This means that not all the sights on this tour will be open at the same time—museums are open during business hours while restaurants are only open after hours. A visit to the sites under private ownership will require some warm personal interaction. It's best to approach this tour around midafternoon, but you can also choose to split the difference between the sites opened during and after business hours and do half during the daytime and the other by moonlight.

❶ Yerebatan Sarnıçı

Few would guess that beneath the institutional concrete facade on the corner of Yerebatan Caddesi and Divanyolu lies one of the last remaining, intact monuments to the Byzantine era in Istanbul, the **Yerebatan Cistern** (closed Tues; p. 152). After paying the admission fee, take the flight of steps that leads down to a humid subterranean underworld of imperial grandeur accentuated by modern spotlights and even a bit of artistry. The cavernous and palatial space glows with the reds and blues of theatrical mood lighting. You might recognize the space from a scene in the James Bond move, *From Russia with Love,* which was filmed here.

Upon exit, with Sultanahmet Park on your left, walk west along Divanyolu toward the Sultanahmet tramway stop. After the tramway stop, turn left onto Işik Sok. Down on your right is the main entrance to:

❷ Binbirdirek Sarnıçı (The Philoxenus Cistern)

In contrast to the celebrity of the Yerebatan Cistern, this underground space is generally ignored by the tour groups. Known colloquially as the Cistern of 1,001 Columns (p. 169), it was built during Constantine's time, but today the dry, cavernous, and vaulted space serves several purposes: In addition to a museum, the cistern is also a restaurant, cafe, and wine house that accommodates exhibits, cultural performances (like the *sema*), and weddings. The small cafe is on a platform to the back and serves fresh baked goods; in the evenings, the atmosphere, music, and a stock of water pipes attract a young crowd.

If you're visiting between April and December, exit through the rear entrance to your right and turn left onto Klodferer Cad. Turn left onto Dostluk Yurdu Sok. and then cut through the little corner park on your right to Piyer Loti Cad. For visits at other times of the year, retrace your steps to Divanyolu and turn left. Turn left again down Piyer Loti Cad. The entrance to the next attraction is in the blue Eminönü Municipality Building. Just inside the service entrance, to the right of the main entrance, is:

❸ The Şerefiye or Theodosius Sarniç

This cistern is still in a fairly raw state—no mood lighting and mirrors—but at least they've removed the debris that was scattered about the space. A tunnel in the

right wall is said to connect this cistern with the neighboring Binbirdirek cistern. This is a great place to practice your Turkish, because local security and service staff working in the municipal building hanging outside are eager to let visitors have a look. Closed Saturday and Sunday.

Retrace your steps back to Klodferer Cad. and turn right. Klodferer merges onto Üçler Sok., a narrow road with local shops, including a laundry, a grocer, and a neighborhood *pasthane* (mixed in with a creeping arrival of large restaurants and one or two carpet shops geared toward tourists). You will also pass a mosque with a tiny graveyard. Continue straight along the southwestern rim of the Hippodrome, veering right down the hill onto Nakılbent Sok. The road curves sharply to the left and opens up onto a raised tea garden on your right and, straight ahead, the:

❹ Nakkaş Store & 6th-Century-A.D. Cistern

The sleek operation of Nakkaş is a shopping complex that puts pretty much all of Istanbul's quality commercial ware under one roof. If you can get past the cases of diamond and gold jewelry (carpets, *kilims,* and ceramics are upstairs) without getting sucked into the glamour, ask a salesperson if they wouldn't mind your having a look at their art gallery, essentially a **6th-century-a.d. cistern** transformed into a space for exhibitions and concerts. Tell them I sent you. If you buy something then maybe I can get a free Iznik plate.

Turn left out of Nakkaş and stop at the next intersection. Notice on your right the Spherion, or retaining wall of the Hippodrome. Turn left. The next street is Küçük Ayasofya Cad.; turn right to see the bright Eresin Crown Hotel.

❺ Byzantine Artifacts

A small section of another ancient cistern was uncovered during the construction of the **Eresin Crown Hotel** (p. 74). To the left of the lobby is a sitting area built on and around the cistern, and above an exposed (preserved) Byzantine mosaic detail. Off the lobby is the Column Bar, where some of the 49 artifacts recovered during construction are on display, including upright columns, capitals, and funerary stelae.

Go up the incline of Küçük Ayasofya Cad. (taking the right fork at the top) and follow the road around to the right past the entrance to the Arasta Bazaar. Be careful, as there is little sidewalk to speak of. Just past where the road curves left and in front of the Sultanahmet Sarayı Restaurant and Hotel is the entrance to:

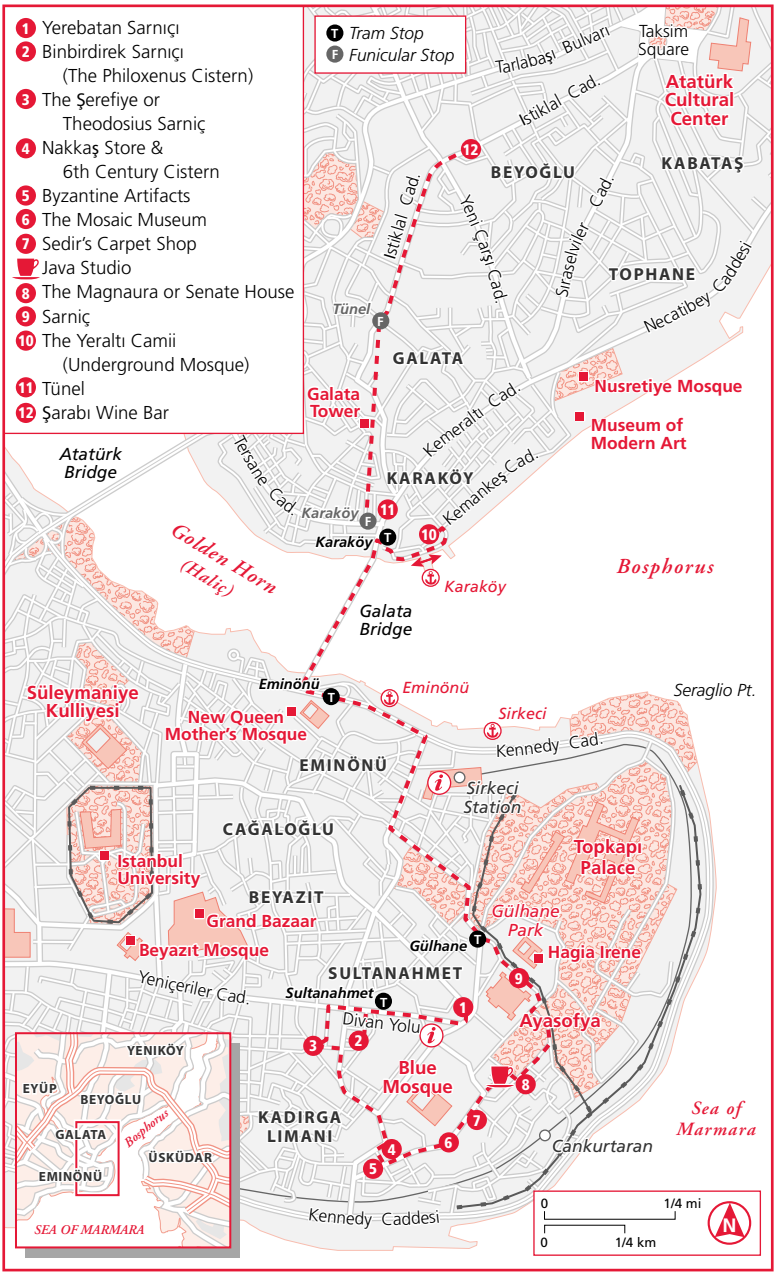
❻ The Mosaic Museum

For now, the **Mosaic Museum** (p. 150) is the best (and perhaps the only large-scale) example of the grandiose lost Great Palace. The museum preserves, partially *in situ,* a recovered portion of a peristyle courtyard that was completely tiled in mosaic patterns, in predominantly greens and ochers, of hunting and pastoral scenes. Amazingly, this portion of the "underground" tour was once the top layer of the city. Closed Monday.

The museum exit opens into the middle of the Arasta Bazaar. Continue up (to the left) and exit the bazaar to the right just before the tea garden. Cross Torun Sok. and continue straight along Mimar Mehmet Ağa Caddesi to no. 39 and:

❼ Şedir's Carpet Shop

Try and get past the commercial wolves to the shop's basement where you can find the remains of two significant Byzantine findings. Below, on the floor of the first (upper) level is a **geometric mosaic** depicting patterns found in both religious buildings and in private homes; for this reason the building has not been identified. Speculation is that the mosaic belongs to the Palace of Marina, sister of Theodosius II (5th c. A.D.). About 5m (16 ft.) below the level of the mosaic is a barrel-vaulted space, and in the south wall, a niche with a **sacred spring.** The presence of a worn depiction of the iconographic Hodegetria (literally: Greek for "She who shows the way," here, the Holy Mother pointing to son as Savior) on the wall of the niche suggests that this was the Monastery of the Panaghia Hodegetria, founded by Saint Pulcheria, daughter of Emperor Arcadius.


1 Yerebatan Sarnıçı
2 Binbirdirek Sarnıçı (The Philoxenus Cistern)
3 The Şerefiye or Theodosius Sarniç
4 Nakkaş Store & 6th Century Cistern
5 Byzantine Artifacts
6 The Mosaic Museum
7 Sedir's Carpet Shop
Java Studio
8 The Magnaura or Senate House
9 Sarniç
10 The Yeraltı Camii (Underground Mosque)
11 Tünel
12 Şarabı Wine Bar
T Tram Stop
F Funicular Stop
Tarlabaşı Bulvarı
Taksim Square
Atatürk Cultural Center
İstiklal Cad.
BEYOĞLU
KABATAŞ
Yeni Çarşı Cad.
Sıraselviler Cad.
TOPHANE
Necatibey Caddesi
Tünel
GALATA
Galata Tower
Nusretiye Mosque
Museum of Modern Art
Kemeraltı Cad.
Atatürk Bridge
Tersane Cad.
Karaköy
KARAKÖY
Kemankeş Cad.
Golden Horn (Haliç)
Bosphorus
Galata Bridge
Eminönü
Seraglio Pt.
Süleymaniye Külliyesi
New Queen Mother's Mosque
Sirkeci
Kennedy Cad.
EMINÖNÜ
Sirkeci Station
CAĞALOĞLU
Topkapı Palace
Istanbul University
BEYAZIT
Grand Bazaar
Gülhane Park
Gülhane
Beyazıt Mosque
Hagia Irene
Yeniçeriler Cad.
SULTANAHMET
Sultanahmet
Divan Yolu
Ayasofya
Blue Mosque
KADIRGA LIMANI
Sea of Marmara
Cankurtaran
Kennedy Caddesi
YENIKÖY
EYÜP
BEYOĞLU
GALATA
Bosphorus
ÜSKÜDAR
EMINÖNÜ
SEA OF MARMARA
0 1/4 mi
0 1/4 km
N

Backtrack up Mimar Mehmet Ağa Cad. and turn right onto Torun/Utangaç Sok. Continue a short distance up for a perfect place to:

TAKE A BREAK

Java Studio is a unique and artsy coffee shop–cum–cultural center and art gallery located opposite the Blue Mosque. Offering a variety of coffees, hot chocolate, and cappuccinos along with refreshing sweet or salty lassis and bakery items to die for, this spot rapidly became a popular hangout for local expats. The owner, herself an expat, donates 20% of the shop's proceeds to support art, music, and sports activities for local children. (Dalbasti Sok. 13A, Sultanahmet; ✆ **0212/517-2378**).

Turn left onto Torün Sok. and go up the steep cobbled incline past the Blue House on your right and the domes of the Blue Mosque to your left. Straight ahead (the street changes names to Utangaç Sok.) are some of the more intrusive carpet salesmen in town; ignore them and turn right at the end onto Tevkifhane Sok. past the saffron-colored Four Seasons Hotel—converted in the 1970s from a political prison. Turn left onto Kutlugün Sok., turn right into the Asia Minor carpet shop, and go into the garden courtyard at the back.

8 The Magnaura or Senate House

A cement staircase in the courtyard leads down into the subterranean remains of the Senate House. The salesmen will be more than happy to let you have a look at the gray and dusty stones, and then give you a tour of their carpet collection in the adjacent shop.

This shop is just one of the hundreds of neighborhood structures built atop the ruins of the Great Palace. In fact, excavations and construction are ongoing next door behind the Four Seasons. After the lot behind the hotel was reclassified from an "archaeological park" to an "urban and archaeological site," the hotel obtained permission to build three new wings on the site. The additional wings will be supported by pylons, allowing excavations and eventually visits to continue to the remains of either the former Senate or Magnaura Palace below.

Continue along Kutlugün Sok. along the wall of the Four Seasons (on your left) and some dilapidated painted cement-block houses on your right. At the end of the street is a restored Ottoman mansion, now a hotel; turn left here onto Işak Paşa Cad. and head up the hill along the outer wall of Topkapı Palace. Go around to the right of the grand Sultanahmet Fountain, past the entrance to Topkapı Palace, and enter into the cobbled and picturesque Soğukçeşme Sok. Down on your right, tucked against the palace walls, is:

9 Sarnıç

Believe it or not, this 1,600-year-old cistern used to house a mechanic's garage. The auto paraphernalia was removed only 25 years ago, and today the cistern is occupied by Sarnıç, an atmospheric restaurant (p. 102). The "wow" quotient goes off the charts when the entryway and staircase down to the dining room/cistern glows under the light of hundreds of candles. Take a minute to survey this spectacular medieval re-creation. The only "modern" addition is the brick fireplace on the left wall.

Continue along the cobbled Soğukçeşme Sokağı past the rear gardens of the Ayasofya, full of archaeological pieces to the ancient puzzle strewn about the yard. If you happen to be back here when the bells go off, it'll be quite an audible shock. Soğukçeşme Sokağı descends sharply, past the open gardens of the Ayasofya Konakları containing a garden conservatory. The sharp descent spills out onto Alemdağ Caddesi, with the entrance to Gülhane Park on your right, enclosed behind the Topkapı Palace walls.

Here is the Gülhane tramway stop; hop on any tram heading toward Eminönü and get off at the third stop, Karaköy, just on the far side of the Galata Bridge. Note: If your train ends at Eminönü, just step out and wait for one heading to Kabataş. At Karaköy, exit the tram to the right and go down to the water and seaside promenade at the base of the Galata Bridge. Follow the promenade to the left (away from the bridge), passing seafood restaurants and fishermen along the way. Up on your left you will see a ramshackle but beautiful blue government building and a plaza. Directly behind the blue building is:

⑩ The Yeraltı Camii (Underground Mosque)

This mosque (p. 181) is a somewhat ominous grid of isolated, individual spaces sectioned off by thick, squat columns supporting a low vaulted ceiling. The scattered prayerful, worshiping in the privacy of their little compartments, may either ignore you or gaze curiously upon you, as few visitors to Istanbul even know to venture here.

Exit the mosque and return to Karaköy Square, where you disembarked from the tramway. Cross Karaköy Square (via the underground pedestrian walkway) and head west to Tersane Cad. Almost immediately on your right is the entrance to the underground funicular.

⑪ Tünel

Just as it always has from 1876 onward, Istanbul's one-stop subway, Tünel, will ease your passage up the very steep Galata Hill to the old neighborhood of Pera (now imaginatively called Tünel). In its early days, the public remained wary of this new system, so the city added an extra wagon and used it to transport animals as proof of its safety. Tünel consists of two cars cleverly designed to accommodate the heavy sloping of the landscape.

Exit Tünel to the right and follow the Nostalgic Tramway tracks up Istiklal Cad. (If you're tired or your feet hurt, take the Nostalgic Tramway and get off at Galatasaray Lisesi.) Opposite the Galatasaray Lisesi (Galatasaray High School) is:

⑫ Şarabı Wine Bar

By now, the wine bar (p. 234) should be hosting enough guests to allow you to migrate to a table in the cellar, which is a brick vaulted cavern and a 19th-century aqueduct. According to the locals, this was part of a system that conducted water from the British Embassy around the corner all the way to Tophane, down the hill along the Bosphorus north of Karaköy. This is the end of the tour, and with a cellar representing around 100 labels, a perfect venue for sampling some of Turkey's outstanding wines.

WALKING TOUR 3 — FROM THE LAND WALLS TO BALAT & FENER

START:	**St. Savior in Chora Byzantine Church (Kariye Muzesi)**
FINISH:	**Golden Horn Road in Ayakapı, in front of the Aya Nikola Church**
TIME:	**Two hours**
BEST TIME:	**Sunday, market-day mornings, and during the Bayram, when you may actually get a glimpse of sheep being butchered for the Feast of the Sacrifice (or this could fall under "worst time"). Otherwise, any day during daylight.**
WORST TIME:	**During the Feast of the Sacrifice (see "Best Time" above)**

One could describe the combined and contiguous neighborhoods of Ayvansaray, Balat, and Fener as a miniature chronicle of the Byzantine, Ottoman, and modern times. These streets have hosted the most influential of empires along with their monuments; housed a mosaic of communities and their support systems; and sustained earthquakes, fire, and sieges. Until recently, the neighborhoods had been forgotten by all but the most destitute of modern Turkish society. In 1997, UNESCO took notice. Then, in January 2003, a program of restoration and rehabilitation of the adjacent neighborhoods began, underwritten by the European Union under the direction of the Municipality of Fatih. While dozens of restoration projects are underway, the streets on this tour remain, for the most part, a (faded) mirror of what they were a mere hundred, or hundreds of years, ago. In

 fact, this walking tour is sparse on the "take a break" feature, because as of the time of this writing, there simply was no place to take a break other than what's listed here. I suspect that will have changed by the time you get there.

❶ St. Savior in Chora

The heavy brick Byzantine structure that is the monastery of St. Savior "in the Country" (p. 150) was built in the 4th century A.D. on the main "Mese," or avenue, out toward Adrianople, today's Edirne, in Thrace. When Theodosius constructed his famous land walls in the 5th century A.D. (p.164) to accommodate the growth of the city, the church was brought into the municipal fold, so to speak, and thus protected by the great line of defensive towers, walls, and moats that you will get a taste of just up the hill. But although the church sits inside the walls, the Byzantine bustle that once grew up around it has long since ceded to the surrounding neighborhood of working-class rural transplants and their more traditional brand of conservatism. The church is flanked on one side by an open square now bustling with visitors lingering at the outdoor tea garden, or perusing among the various vendors selling scarves, ceramic tiles, and postcards (all made in China).

Follow Kariye Camii Sok. up away from the museum and then turn right onto Neşter Sok., which you will follow up the hill. At the top of the hill you arrive at the land walls.

❷ Edirnekapı

Straight ahead you see the monumental **Gate of Charisius** (today known as Edirnekapı), the great portal into the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire and the entryway by which Mehmet the Conqueror victoriously arrived into a defeated Constantinople. A plaque next to the portal commemorates the sultan's arrival. In the words of Evliya Çelebi, the famous Turkish historian and traveler who was present during the procession:

"The Sultan then having the pontifical turban on his head and sky-blue boots on his feet, mounted on a mule and bearing the sword of Mohammed in his hand, marched in at the head of seventy or eighty thousand Muslim heroes, crying out 'Halt not conquerors! God be praised! Ye are the conquerors of Constantinople!'"

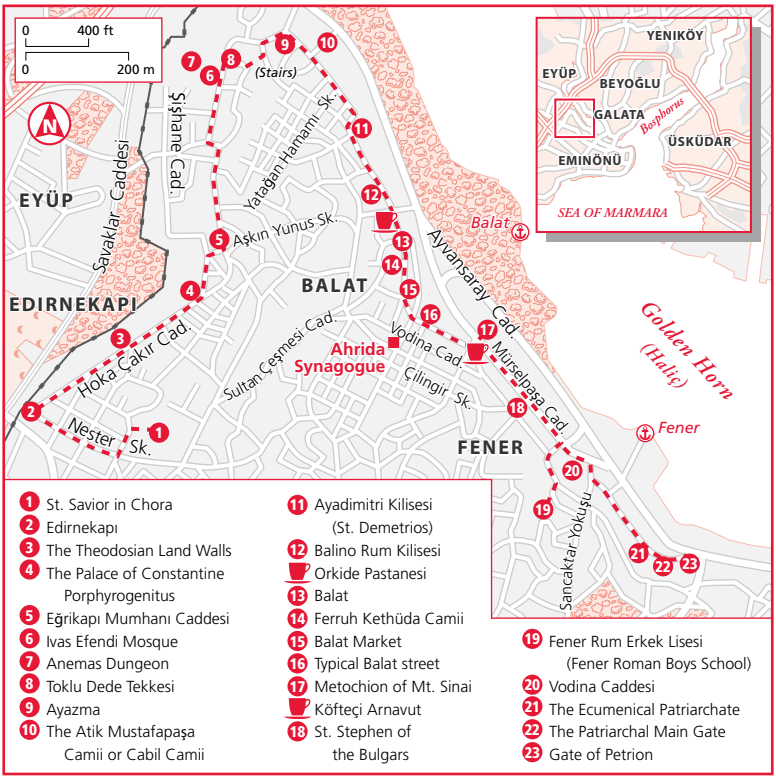
Look to the south along the walls to the **Mihrimah Sultan Camii,** her minarets rising in the distance (p. 187).

Walk along the walls, keeping them to your left. You are now walking the cobbled street running adjacent to a section of:

❸ The Theodosian Land Walls

This is Ayvansaray, one of the poorest—and most religiously conservative—neighborhoods along the Golden Horn. The next nine or so towers complete the original section of the Theodosian walls, while the section completing the defenses down to the waterway were added later by subsequent emperors. Although most of these secondary towers are gated off, one or two still serve as tradesmen workshops, and one contains a public fountain added during Ottoman times. You can still take a peek inside some of these towers to get a glimpse of the lower stories. You will also see a steep stone staircase that leads to the top of the walls for a sweeping view of the Golden Horn and Beyoğlu. The resident youth use the top of the walls as a pedestrian highway, and they will be surprised when you pop your head up. On the opposite side of the street are colorfully whitewashed and enchantingly dilapidated houses and shops fronted by the rare octogenarian sitting guard.

Along the road, you may pass a bundled housewife heading purposefully to her destination, but not so distracted that she won't cast a curious eye your way.



Otherwise, your primary company will be the sound of your own shoes on the cobblestones.

About 600m (1,970 ft.) farther on from Edirnekapı, the walls open up to a multi-toned red-brick and limestone monolith towering above a small park. This is all that remains of the imperial glory that was:

4 The Palace of Constantine Porphyrogenitus

Known in Turkish as the Tekfur Sarayı, the palace is now under restoration. This palace is, or was, part of the Blachernae Imperial Complex, which began as a royal retreat in the middle of the 6th century A.D. under Emperor Anastasius, to accommodate visits to the nearby sacred *ayasma* (later in this walk).

The palace was enlarged and enriched over the next few centuries, particularly in the reign of Alexus I Comnenus. Under Manuele I (1143–80), the permanent residence of the imperial court was transferred from the Bucoleon Palace, along the Marmara Sea Walls, to this neighborhood, at that time known as Blachernae. After the fall of the city, the palace at Blachernae was abandoned and then used by the Ottomans as a stable for the elephants, giraffes, and other oversize and exotic animals that they corralled from Africa. Afterward, the building endured a further indignity as a brothel, and then later as a pottery plant, a bottling plant, and a poorhouse.

The perimeter is composed of the inner and outer rings of the defensive walls. In the park at the monolith's base there might be some old men tossing dice on a backgammon board, presumably one of them the patron of the goat chained nearby grazing on some blades of grass. There was also a chicken poking its head around the unkempt underbrush when last I visited.

If restoration work is completed by the time you arrive, climb up to the first story, where you can see the full and complex system that makes up the land walls stretching all the way south to the Sea of Marmara (daily 9am–7pm; admission 3TL).

Leaving the entrance of the Palace, turn left and follow Şişhane Sok. Take the 90-degree right at the mosque and then the first left onto:

5 Eğrikapı Mumhanı Caddesi

The street you are now on is presumed to be the trajectory of the later land walls, although except for some crumbling masses of stones, you're more apt to ogle the mixture of dilapidated houses and '70s-style buildings swathed in funky exterior tiling. The road winds down and around through this quiet section of Ayvansaray, departing from Eğrikapı Mumhanı Caddesi as it continues straight onto **Çedik Papuçlu Sokak.** At one of the bends in the road is a dirt lot on your right, from which you can look out over the rooftops through to the Golden Horn. In the late afternoon, the schoolchildren may join you out of curiosity.

Continue down this street, through a zigzag to your left, and turn left at the "T" onto Mahkeme Külhane Sok. At the end of this short section of the street you will arrive at another "T." Directly opposite and slightly to the left is the:

6 Ivas Efendi Mosque

This mosque is set in a small overgrown garden containing a tiny Ottoman graveyard. Inside, apart from the tiled *mihrab,* representing the height of Iznik ceramic craftsmanship, the most notable characteristic of this mosque is that it sits atop a section of the defensive walls attached to Blachernae Palace.

Walk around to the back of the grounds of the mosque and you will come upon the remains of the:

7 Anemas Dungeon

It was from the **Tower of Isaac Angelus** that Emperor Alexius I Comnenus greeted the First Crusaders, and where the deposed Emperor Angelus was imprisoned. He was briefly released to share rule with his son Alexius IV, and then a year later, in 1214, both were locked up and then strangled. At least six Byzantine emperors shared similar fates, enduring torture, mutilation, or the more traditional punishment for a deposed ruler, blinding. From the lone park bench you can admire the elevated view over the northern neighborhoods of the Golden Horn (and the highway) and contemplate the fate of emperors. The staircase leading down to the chambers is currently cordoned off. Imagine the neighborhood urchins who get to explore the caverns underneath their homes when nobody is looking. (Did you remember to bring your flashlight?)

Exiting the main gate to the mosque, turn left onto Dervişzade Sok. and stop at the next intersection, Ahmet Rufai Sok. On your right (there are some treacherous original marble stairs on the right side of Dervişzade Sok., but the easier, ground-level entrance is on Ahmet Rufai Sok.) are the ruins of the:

8 Toklu Dede Tekkesi

Though the site is currently undergoing restoration, if the workers see you hesitate at the entrance, they will most likely invite you in for a look. Sadly, there's not much of anything original here. At first, this was the site of a late Byzantine church of unknown origins. The church was converted to a derviş lodge and named after Toklu Ibrahim Dede, who is said to have been a companion of Mohammad and present in the Arab siege of A.D. 673.

Ahmet Rufai Sok. narrows and ends at a wooden building that is also the Pembe Kösk Nargile Café. Take the meandering flight of stone steps straight down the hill to Albayrak Sok. Go left at the bottom of the steps and take the first right. At the next intersection, where the street meets with Mustafa Paşa Bostanı Sok., is a small church, housing the:

❾ Ayazma

The Ayazma, or Sacred Spring, is the most celebrated shrine to the Virgin Mary in all of Constantinople (p. 146). Inside is an altar swathed in marble above the spring and a lovely little garden.

Turning right from the church, continue down the main, albeit quiet, neighborhood street of Mustafa Paşa Bostanı Sok. and take the first left onto Çember Sok. The Byzantine-era church before you is now:

❿ The Atik Mustafapaşa Camii or Cabil Camii

The saint of this church has not been definitively identified; however, it is commonly understood, until proven otherwise, to be the Church of St. Thekla. What's special about the church—believed to date to the 9th or 10th century A.D.—is that it is the earliest example in Constantinople of a cross-in-square plan. It is also the first church constructed in the city after the period of Iconoclasm. If scholars hold to the belief that the plan represents a transition in the construction of Byzantine churches (not a done deal, by any means), then Thekla would be the predecessor to the canonical churches that sprouted up all over Russia in the 11th century. If you're a fan of barrel vaults, it's worth a walk-through, while the garden courtyard will inevitably be occupied by a scant handful of neighborhood grandfathers.

Retrace your steps to Mustafa Paşa Bostanı Sok. and follow this street as it doglegs around to the right next to a high wall and empties into a triangular intersection. Turn left onto Ağaçlı Çeşme Sok., and then immediately to your left is the continuation of the wall and a solid metal gate.

⓫ Ayadimitri Kilisesi (St. Demetrios)

A church bearing this name existed on this site as early as 1334, but the current church dates only to the first half of the 18th century. The church of St. Demetrios served as the Patriarchal See from 1597 to 1601; then briefly the Ecumenical Patriarchate operated out of the Virgin Paramythia until it found its final home at St. George, its current site (see below). You can take your chances and hope the caretaker answers the bell, or contact the Ecumenical Patriarchate in advance for an appointment to visit the church. The plain, timber-roofed exterior is adorned by a pretty landscaped garden, the simplicity of which belies the restrained opulence of the interior decor. There are scenes from the life of Christ in the gallery, and the gilded iconostasis is covered in icons.

Continue down Ağaçlı Çeşme Sok., a quiet street that runs parallel to and above the Golden Horn. By now, you've gotten the hang of identifying the Byzantine buildings by their construction of alternating red brick and limestone, often with a marble portal, so you should have no trouble now in locating the:

⓬ Balino Rum Kilisesi

Just a bit up on your right is the Balino Rum Kilisesi. This is the Church of the Mother of God Valinou. The church is in a terrible state of decay, both inside and out, so just admire the ruddy and ragged exterior and be on your way. Ağaçlı Çeşme Sokak begins to enliven a bit as you continue past where the street name changes to Mahkeme Altı Caddesi.

TAKE A BREAK

Orkide Pastanesi, Mahkeme Altı Cad. 34, with its pink exterior, is an unpretentious local cafe/bakery where you can sit down and get sweet or savory cookies and a cup of tea. (If you're hungering for more than just some pastries, an alternative "take a break" at a local eatery is below.)

Exiting the bakery, you are now in:

⓭ Balat

This is the point in the walking tour where the street life and people-watching gets more interesting. You are walking in the direction of the Balat Market, a local area of shops (many of which are being restored) formerly owned by local Jewish families. Today, they are a semi-collapsed grouping of stores hidden behind haphazard displays of household plumbing, hardware, and other daily necessities.

At the corner of Ferruh Kahya Sok. you see the portal to the:

⓮ Ferruh Kethüda Camii

This is a minor work of the architect Sinan. It was once used as a hall for performances of the Whirling Dervişes, as well as a lodge for the Sümbüli order of dervişes. Some of the interior decoration, namely the marble *mihrab* and the wooden stalactite ornamentation on the capitals, is noteworthy, but I like this mosque for the intimacy of the courtyard. Park benches line the perimeter of the entry court, where on hot summer days the local men jockey for a spot on one of the benches out of the sun's rays. Have a seat here and soak up the vibe; these guys are not yet used to seeing visitors, so you can still enjoy a curious welcome and at the very least, a warm smile.

There is a narrow garden path that cuts through the mosque grounds to the left of the entrance; follow its diagonal trajectory back out to Mahkeme Altı Cad.

⓯ Balat Market

At its zenith in the 18th century, the labyrinth of streets that comprise the market was at the center of a flurry of activity, a bustling community revolving around these single-storied shops once owned by the Jewish merchants of the neighborhood. Most of the buildings have long since been scarred by metal shuttered doors or silenced behind layers of crumbling plaster, but if you look up, some of the buildings will reveal their faded glory. Look for the odd arched brick facade atop decorative friezes, hidden behind a thick mesh of ivy. Note the restoration in progress at nos. 1, 8, 12, 14, 16, and 17.

Straight ahead, the street splits in two by a crumbling island of burnished shops, many shaded by gloomy (albeit very photogenic) plastic or corrugated steel awnings. This cozy section of the market bustles with what seems to be mostly passersby, while a few hardware store owners and adolescent workers mill about the outsides of their shops. Take a minute to absorb this pseudo-square then take the left fork into the warren that is Lavanta Sokak.

After a few steps down this narrow stretch of sidewalk, you will arrive at a confusing intersection, with streets seemingly branching off into all directions. Turn left onto Hızır Çavuş Köprüsü Sok. Restoration work is scheduled for nos. 41, 49, 49A, 90A, 29, and 7, so I'm sending you down this way to show you a:

⓰ Typical Balat Street

Here is an example of what a typical Balat street would have looked like in its heyday in the 17th to 19th centuries. Notice the architectural richness of the neighborhood, characterized by three- and four-storied narrow buildings with protruding enclosed balconies. This is a typical feature of the Jewish houses, with some bearing Hebrew inscriptions, displaying the star of David, or including an engraved stone with the recurrent theme of a boat—the symbol said to represent the lifeline provided to the expelled Jews of Spain in 1492 by the Sultan.

At the end of Hızır Çavuş Köprüsü Sok. (before it changes names to Yıldırım Cad.), you will see the Golden Horn on your left and the manic Mürselpaşa Cad. Carefully, and I mean *carefully,* cross the street. It's only two lanes, but they're wicked. You are now standing on a long strip of green parallel to the Golden Horn and sandwiched between two major roadways. This strip used to house some of Balat's statelier homes, but a project carried out in the

1980s by the mayor to "reclaim" what had deteriorated into an eyesore saw the demolition of entire paragraphs in Balat's and Istanbul's history. Look back at the crumbling wall of buildings from where you crossed, and you'll get an idea of what this neighborhood had come to. Immediately on your left, hiding in plain sight, is the:

⓱ Metochion of Mt. Sinai

This building (p. 176) consists of a Feneriote mansion typical of the upper Ottoman Greek society. For now, it's boarded up, but you can walk around to the park side and see the surreal picture of an extended family of squatters spilling out onto the formerly grand marble terrace of the adjoining chapel. The house itself served for a time as a warehouse and factory.

TAKE A BREAK

Because of your proximity to one of the more renowned little meatball houses in the area, this might be a good time to stop for real sustenance. Back on the other side of Mürselpaşa Caddesi, at no. 155 (✆ **0212/531-6652**), is **Köfteçi Arnavut.** Here you can order as authentic a working-man's meal as you can get: *köfte,* as the name implies, *piyaz* (bean salad), and *arnavut çiğeri* (fried liver the way the Armenians make it). The kitchen runs out of food by 2 or 3pm, and then shuts down for the day.

With the Golden Horn on your left, straight ahead at 12 o'clock is:

⓲ St. Stephen of the Bulgars

The Gothic exterior gives the impression that this church (p. 177) is an ornament on a wedding cake, and that you can almost eat it. As you approach, you'll notice a little hammock in the corner of the grounds where the caretaker takes refuge from the scorching heat of summer. He or his son will greet you at the gate, leaving you to your own devices in admiring the interior craftsmanship and the verdant and inviting garden. The son will likely follow you around, offering helpful hints in rudimentary English.

Cross back to the inland side of the street and turn right on the tiny street just before the lighted intersection. If you have it in you, continue up the steep cobbled hill, or you can just look up, as you can't actually go in the next building on our itinerary. What appears to be a château is the:

⓳ Fener Rum Erkek Lisesi (Fener Roman Boys School)

The sounds of childhood emanate from within both the school and its courtyard, but it's the unmistakable red steeple that dominates this corner of Istanbul. This is the crowning jewel of Fener and the principal school for the small Greek population.

Go back down the hill and turn right onto Vodina Cad. (or turn left if you did not go up the hill).

⓴ Vodina Caddesi

This street extends all the way back to the **Ahrida Sinagogue** (p. 175) and was once the social stage of Balat, a promenade where families could stroll, socialize, gather, and hold events.

Just a short walk ahead, turn left where Vodina comes to an end, and then right onto Yıldırım Caddesi. At the next major "opening" in the road, look to your left; this is where the **Fener (or Phanar) Gate,** one of the entryways through the defensive walls along the Golden Horn, used to be.

Continue straight on a few steps and you will come to an entryway; past a security check up some marble steps on your right is:

㉑ The Ecumenical Patriarchate

Today enclosed within a high stone wall, the relocation of the Orthodox Patriarchate in 1601 to this spot gave the neighborhood of Fener a shot in the arm. For the next 2 centuries, the bourgeoisie of Greek Istanbul, wanting to be in proximity to this seat of power, descended on Fener, and built homes, mansions, and villas. You'll be sharing your visit mostly with the new class of wealthy Russian tourists and the odd Serbian couple here on pilgrimage. It's enough to see the wondrous reverence in their eyes to overcome your awe at

the opulence of the interior. Admire the graceful mosaics of symmetrical angels over the interior portal of the nave, and try not to be blinded by the halo of lights reflected off of the iconostasis (the gold screen with icons).

Exit to the right and stop in front of the oversize steel gate in the section of the exterior wall of the grounds.

㉒ The Patriarchal Main Gate

On April 22, 1821, this gate was permanently welded shut as a symbol of the eternal grief caused by the death of Gregory V, then the Patriarch who was hanged at this very spot. Gregory was an unfortunate and innocent victim of the reprisals by the Ottomans after the Greek Revolt in Peloponnesus.

Continue along the cobbled Yıldırım Cad., which curves around to the left. Just before it empties out into the chaos of Istanbul, take note of the empty lot to your left. This is the former site of the:

㉓ Gate of Petrion

It was here that in 1204, Doge Dandalo breached the city's defenses and led the Latin crusaders to victory (and why the bronze horses are at St. Mark's in Venice rather than at the Hippodrome, where they belong). The fateful precedent was set, for in 1453, although the Petrion Gate's defenses managed to withstand the onslaught by the Ottoman invaders, its defenders surrendered upon hearing that the city had fallen. Because of this admission of defeat, Fatih Mehmet spared the neighborhood from the general sacking permitted to his soldiers in the rest of the city. But, like the rest of Istanbul, this neighborhood was not spared the sacking that came in more modern times. The destruction of monuments like this one for municipal progress and development has been a sad, recurring theme throughout Istanbul, one that seems to be heading, thankfully, into decline.

This marks the end of the tour. You can either wander around (you are now in the extremely untouristy neighborhood of Ayakapı), or cross the highway to the banks of the Golden Horn and enjoy some sea breezes and Istanbul vistas. The ferry at the Fener docks can get you back to Haliç, near but not at Eminönü via Kasımpaşa, or hop on the no. 55T bus to Taksim or the no. 99A bus to Eminönü.

Shopping

Perhaps it was the renown of the Grand Bazaar that put Istanbul on the map of the world's great shopping destinations. But it's the hunting grounds of Old Istanbul, the elegant boutiques of Nişantaşı, the burgeoning of homegrown designers, and the revival in traditional handicrafts and artwork that have kept it there.

1 THE SHOPPING SCENE

WHAT SHOULD I BUY?

The first thing that comes to mind when plotting a plan of attack for acquisitions in Istanbul is a rug, be it a ***kilim*** or **tribal carpet.** Carpets, *kilims,* and a whole slew of related items that have lost their nomadic utility comprise an indescribably complex industry, but it is unlikely that you will get very far before being seduced by the irresistible excess of enticing keepsakes.

Most people are unaware that Turkey manufactures some of the best **leather items** in Europe, comparable in quality to those sold in Florence, Italy (and in some stores in Florence, the merchandise *is* Turkish). Because leather items are individually produced in-house, quality and fit may vary, but the advantage of this is that you can have a jacket, skirt, or trousers made-to-order, change the design of a collar, or exchange an unsightly zipper for buttons at prices far less than what you'd pay back home.

The entire length of Kalpakçılar Caddesi in the Grand Bazaar glitters with precious metals from the Nuruosmaniye Gate to the Beyazıt Gate. But Turkish-bought **gold and silver** are no longer the bargains they used to be, as the cost of precious metals—particularly gold—continues to skyrocket. However, cheap labor in China and India might still keep Turkish jewelers from pricing themselves out of the market, so all hope is not lost.

Some of the world's best **meerschaum** comes from Turkey. This heat-resistant sea foam becomes soft when wet, allowing it to be carved into playful pipes that would make a collector out of the most die-hard nonsmoker. An afternoon in a historic *hamam* will expose you to some of the most beautiful traditional **white copper** objects, available as kitchen and bathing utensils, although keep in mind that you can't cook with this toxic stuff unless the inside has been coated with tin.

Local Lingo

Walking through a bazaar or past a restaurant entrance may elicit a *"buyurun"* or *"buyurun efendem,"* both of which are expressions of courtesy. *Buyurun* has no English equivalent; it's used as an invitation to "Please feel free" (to look, to come in), or as a "You're welcome," much like the Italian *prego. Efendem* is a highly polite gender-neutral form of address that also means "Pardon?"

Tips A Note About Bargaining

That old measure by which you offer the seller half of his initial price is old hat. They've caught on to our shopping savvy, and in fact they don't care. Plenty of stupendously wealthy Russians and groups of cruise-ship passengers with weighty wallets provide easy targets. Still I've heard that a good rule of thumb is to offer about 25% less than you're willing to pay. In my experience, you must hold off your counteroffer for as long as you can get away with it. This method will meet with counteroffers and varying responses, and after a few times you might succeed in talking the price down. If the shopkeeper stonewalls, remember there's another one selling the same stuff next door. You'll get the hang of it.

Another bargaining tool: Narrow down your choice to two pieces. Snub your first choice and put it down (with plans to come back to it later). Negotiate on your second choice—undoubtedly one of the finer samples in the shop, and therefore one of the pricier items on sale. Once you've established that it's out of your price range, turn to your first choice with a disappointed "and what about that one?"

As far as **antiques** go, shopkeepers seem to be practiced in manufacturing bogus certificates of origin that will facilitate your trip through Customs, but beware: The certificate may not be the only counterfeit item in the shop. Collectors should keep in mind that it is prohibited by Turkish law to export anything dated prior to the 20th century without the proper authorization from a museum directorate.

Less traditional items can easily fill a suitcase, and with clever Turkish entrepreneurs coming up with new merchandise on a regular basis, you won't get bored on your second or third visit. **Pillowcases, embroidered tablecloths, ornamental tea services,** and **brass coffee grinders** are just some of the goodies that never seem to get old.

COVERED BAZAARS & STREET MARKETS

Arasta Bazaar Less overwhelming in scope than the Grand Bazaar is the picturesque shopping arcade attached to the southern edge of the Blue Mosque. It's a total tourist trap, but there are a few high-quality gems mixed in with the stacks of cheap ceramics and evil eyes made in China. Open daily from 9am to 7pm (closes earlier in winter and during Ramadan). Sultanahmet. Entrance on Topçu Cad. (across from the Blue House hotel) and on Küçük Ayasofya Cad. Tram: Sultanahmet.

Egyptian Spice Bazaar (Mısır Carsışı) ★★ At the center of the commercial hub of Eminönü, the Spice Bazaar is an indoor emporium of comestibles, rare (and mostly counterfeit) products, colorful elf slippers, and polyester scarves, among other interesting, if not dazzling things. Purveyors will be hawking saffron (don't bother, the stuff sold as Turkish saffron is dried safflower), Turkish delight (if you must, buy it elsewhere), and a caldron's worth of items promising superhuman sexual prowess (no comment). Stick to the fresh and dried fruit and nuts, whole spices (like cinnamon bark and whole peppercorns), teas, and any irresistible souvenirs, and remember that the stuff worth eating is in humble shopfronts located just outside the cover of the bazaar. The real action is to the right of the entrance inside the bustling narrow aisle of vending stalls displaying countless varieties of olives, cheeses, fruit, and vegetables. The chaotic streets behind the bazaar

deal in general necessities, from housewares, to long johns, to pots and pans, a daunting variety of fresh cheeses and olives, and the odd kitchen gadget normally seen on late-night TV. Sometimes you really never know what you need until you stumble upon it. Open Monday to Saturday 8:30am to 6:30pm. Eminönü, opposite Galata Bridge. No phone. Tram: Eminönü; buses too numerous to list.

The Grand Bazaar (Kapalı Ç arşısı) This is the renowned Grand Bazaar (aka the Kapalı Çarşısı or Covered Market) that you've heard so much about—one of the world's great shopping destinations. It's certainly one of the world's major tourist traps. It's also a feast of color and texture, of glitter and glitz. It's also not to be missed. So take a deep breath, leave your valuables (and any cash you'd rather not spend) back in the hotel safe, and dive in. Open Monday through Saturday from 8:30am to 7pm (closes earlier during Ramadan). See also p. 132 for more suggestions on touring the historic shops in the Grand Bazaar. Beyazıt, Eminönü. No phone. www.kapalicarsi.org.tr. Best entrances through the Beyazıt Gate (across from the Beyazıt stop on the tramway along Divanyolu) and the Nuruosmaniye Gate (from the Çemberlitaş tramway stop on Divanyolu, follow Vezirhanı Cad. to the arched entrance to the mosque grounds, which leads to the bazaar). Tram: Beyazıt or Çemberlitaş.

Istiklal Caddesi A bustling promenade of cafes, clothing stores, blaring record shops, and bookstores, Istiklal Caddesi from Tünel to Taksim Square may be starting to resemble an open-air mall, but it's still an essential activity for all who visit Istanbul. As the likes of Nike, Polo, Benetton, Desa, Quiksilver, and other international retailers crank up the cost of real estate, the numerous galleries or (pasajı) found hidden in plain sight all along the street become that much more interesting. Keep a lookout for the grungy Aznavur Pasajı (no. 212), the lovely Avrupa Pasajı (see the Balıkpazarı below), the Çiçek Pasajı, the posh Pasaj Markiz (no. 360/109), and the Rumeli Han (no. 88). Istiklal Cad., Beyoğlu. Bus, metro, Nostalgic Tramway, or tram/funicular to Taksim; Funicular to Tünel.

Ortaköy The arts-and-crafts fair year-round on Sundays in Ortaköy is Istanbul's equivalent of "downtown." Here you'll find a mixture of street-smart jewelry, tie-dyed textiles, and revolutionary Turkish ideas. The street food here is lots of fun. Around the Ortaköy boat landing, along the Bosphorus. Bus: 22, 22RE, 25E, 40, 40T, or 42T.

OUTDOOR MARKETS

Local markets offer a window into the vibrancy and color of the neighborhood, and provide a priceless interaction with the locals. Istanbul has more than its fair share of outdoor markets, selling the usual assortment of fresh produce, household staples, sweat shirts, and maybe the odd antique. A walk through one of these provides yet another

Fun Facts Did You Know?

The blue-and-white evil eye *(nazar boncuğu)* has its roots in Anatolian culture, although the symbol has its variants throughout the Middle East. Turks believe strongly in the power of the evil eye (if you could only see the tattoos beneath the *hijab* . . .) to ward off negative energy, especially against young children. But the evil eye transcends this culture—just check the pyramid on the backside of your U.S. 1-dollar bill. Oh, and by the way, all of the blue evil eyes are now made in China.

Caveat Emptor! Carpet-Buying Tips

"Where are you from?" seems an innocuous enough question from a carpet dealer, but answer it, and you're on your way to being scalped. Questions like "Where are you staying" actually tell the salesperson about your economic status, as do "What do you do?" *(How much money do you earn?),* "Where do you live?" *(Hey what a coincidence! My cousin lives near you!),* "How much time will you be staying here?" *(How much time do you have before you have to make your final decision?),* "What are you looking for?" *(Do you even have any idea about carpets?),* and "How long have you been here?" *(How much have you already learned about our sleazy ways?).*

First rule of thumb: Lie about where you're staying. Take note of the name of the humblest pension near your actual hotel, and file it away for future use. Also, for the Americans, they know that our countrymen are among the biggest spenders of any nationality visiting Turkey (particularly those disgorging from the cruise ships) and easily one of those with the least bargaining prowess. This is where fluency in a foreign language may come in handy. Above all, do your homework and know what you like before you arrive so you don't waste precious bargaining time overpaying for the "best sample in the shop."

Visitors traveling in groups with a guide will inevitably wind up in the guide's friend's shop, possibly even in one with a girl knotting rugs for show. And any sales pitch worth its salt will begin with a minicourse on Turkish carpets (some of which is actually true). Over tea, of course. Although these are interesting from an educational and cultural point of view, just remember: The carpet you buy is only as expensive as the amount you are willing to pay. Oh, and your tour guide, your tour company, and, yes, the bus driver, are each going to earn a hefty commission off of your purchase. (Actually, the same commission system applies to almost everything you buy.)

Yes, buying a carpet in Turkey can be a very daunting task. But this is not meant to diminish your admiration of the pieces, only to arm you for the negotiations, which ultimately will get you an exceptional souvenir of a wonderful country and its wonderful crafts.

opportunity to witness another facet of this complex culture. The major markets (open from 9am to sundown) include the daunting **Çarşamba Pazarı** ("Wednesday" market), held in and around the Fatih Mosque, and the **Beşiktaş Cumartesi Pazarı** (Saturday Bazaar), Nüzhetiye Caddesi opposite the lovely Ihlamur Pavilion. There is also a **flea market** between Sahaflar and the Grand Bazaar, and down at Eminönü every Sunday, and a daily **antiques market** in Horhor (Horhor Cad. Kırk Tulumba, Aksaray). With feng shui taking hold of the consciousness of Istanbul's upper crust, it's no surprise to see organic produce close behind. The **Ekolojik Pazarı,** a new organic market in Feriköy (in the car park on Bomonti Cad., Lala Şahin Sok.; take the metro from Taksim to Osmanbey), fills the niche. It's open every Saturday from 8am to 5pm. And giving a boost to

the embryonic art and design scene in Cihangir, the local municipality has organized the new **Pazart,** an open-air design fair showcasing art, crafts, and artisanal foods against a beguiling backdrop of domes, minarets, and sea (and views, views, and more views from the outdoor bazaar's perch on the hilltop above the Bosphorus). The market is located in Roma Bahcesi, aka Sanatkarlar Parkı, open on the 1st and 3rd Sunday of every month from 3 to 8pm, 1 to 7pm in winter.

2 SHOPPING A TO Z

Shops in Istanbul are officially open Monday to Saturday, 9am to 6 or 7pm, meaning that some shops open slightly later (9:30 or 10am) and even close for lunch. In practice, though, it is rare that a shop in the tourist-heavy Old City will be closed on Sundays. Shops along Istiklal Caddesi and in the passageways (the Galatasaray Fish Market, for example) are open on Sundays.

ART & ANTIQUES

Objects dating to the Ottoman era make up a popular category for roving antiquers. As a rule, all items displayed can be legally purchased and exported to your home country (unless the piece is unique, in which case you need documentation from a museum director to buy it). Objects dated prior to the Ottoman period are considered fruit from the poisonous tree. Where carpets are concerned, the cutoff is 100 years—you'll need a certificate from the shopkeeper stating the age, origin, and authenticity of the carpet. (This is standard practice, anyway.) So if you're serious, your first stop should be the neighborhood along **Çukurcuma** in the extremely hilly neighborhood below Beyoğlu and Taksim.

Artrium This shop is one of the last holdouts in the pasajı, or atrium, just outside the entrance to the Tünel. The store stocks old-ish ceramics, textiles, costume jewelry, and printed matter. Tünel Geçidi 7, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/251-4362.** Nostalgic Tramway to Galatasaray.

Atomik Saat Galerisi Vintage watches from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union clutter up the diminutive display case at the back of the Iç Bedesten in the Grand Bazaar. If you're crazy about wristwatches and are hankering for something a bit exotic, this is the place. Iç Bedesten 3–4, Grand Bazaar. ✆ **0212/520-7154.** Tram: Beyazıt or Çemberlitaş.

Bedestan This tiny storefront specializes in old watches and silver. At last peek, Bedestan had a 1940 model with only the Vacheron name, an 1886 with only the Constantin label, and a 1925 Art Deco Omega. If you see something interesting, call the mobile number provided in the window, as the shop is usually closed. Avrupa Pasajı 8, Galatasaray. ✆ **0212/249-9541** or mobile 0532/412-6873. Nostalgic Tramway to Galatasaray.

Horhor Bit Pazarı One of the lesser-known and blissfully lesser-touristed markets is where you'll find dusty Turkish memorabilia from the 20th century. Merchandise runs the gamut from tableware, lamps, and furniture, and on to oversize architectural remnants, spread out among the more than 200 shops on six floors. Horhor Cad., Kırk Tulumba, Aksaray. Tram: Aksaray.

Khaftan Art and Antiques The sophistication of Khaftan is immediately apparent. With your big toe barely over the threshold, your eyes and ears are seduced by a relentless assault of good taste. The boutique artfully displays a high-quality mixture of fine Ottoman

 art both miniature and life-size, old and new, including 17th-century Ottoman textiles, early-19th century-ceramics, collectible maps and prints, ethnic jewelry, and calligraphy. This store was originally Nakkaş Books, till the owner cashed in to retire on the shores of the Aegean. Nakilbent Sok. 32, Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/458-5425.** www.khaftan.com. Tram: Sultanahmet.

Ottomania Located in Beyoğlu just outside the Tünel atrium, Ottomania specializes in high-quality old maps and engravings. Sofyalı Sok. 30–32 (exit Tünel and walk straight through the atrium), Tünel. ✆ **0212/243-2157.** Tünel from Karaköy; Nostalgic Tramway to Tünel; Metro: Şişhane.

Sofa Art and Antiques Just steps from the Grand Bazaar, Sofa is a fixture on the wide pedestrian outdoor mall of Nuruosmaniye Caddesi. The shop is artfully stocked with an eclectic mix of high-quality framed calligraphic works, illuminations, and miniatures, as well as religious icons, copper, silver, and ceramics. There are also plenty of smaller items (albeit just as unaffordable, at least to a writer's wallet) to finger while browsing your way around the store. Nuruosmaniye Cad. 85, Cağaloğlu. ✆ **0212/520-2850.** www.kashifsofa.com. Tram: Çemberlitaş.

BOOKS

Galeri Kayseri Anything you ever wanted to know about Istanbul or Turkey is somewhere inside this shop—or their branch across the street. Galeri Kayseri also carries a daunting collection of English-language Turkey-centric fiction, cookbooks, guidebooks, and art tomes. Divanyolu 58 and across the street at no. 11, Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/512-0456.** www.galerikayseri.com. Tram: Sultanahmet.

Homer Kitabevi Down the street from the Galatasaray High School is this superlative bookstore, stocking a rich selection of books on Turkish issues, including politics, history, architecture, photography, travel, and religion. If you can't find it here, it's either sold out or it doesn't exist. Yeni Çarşı Cad. 28/A, Galatasaray. ✆ **0212/249-5902.** www.homerbooks.com. Nostalgic Tramway to Galatasaray.

Istanbul Kitapçısı Owned and operated by the Istanbul Municipality, this bookstore stocks cassettes, videos, travel books, maps, and coffee-table books in a variety of languages. They also have a selection of prints and posters. Istiklal Cad. 191, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/292-7692.** www.istanbulkitapcisi.com. Nostalgic Tramway to Galatasaray or Odakule.

Librairie de Pera The last bookseller left on the Grand Rue de Pera (long since renamed) that in its heyday was famed for its booksellers, Librairie de Pera is the little engine that could. The current owner, Ugur Güraca, presides over a multilingual collection of more than 40,000 rare books, some bound with goat skin, as well as prints, photographs, and etchings. Galip Dede Cad. 8 (opposite the Galatasaray Mevlevihanesi), Tünel/Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/243-7477.** www.librairiedepera.com. Funicular or Nostalgic Tramway to Tünel.

Sahaflar Çarşısı The Book Bazaar is a wonder of the printed page. Vendors carry books on Turkish subjects ranging from art to architecture to music, both old and new. Also, some of the finest examples of Ottoman art and calligraphy can be found in this book lover's mecca. Sahaflar Çarşısı, Grand Bazaar (enter from Çadırcılar Cad.). Tram: Beyazıt or Çemberlitaş.

Robinson Crusoe Robinson Crusoe stocks a limited selection of English-language fiction, travel guides, and books on Istanbul and Turkey. They also have a minuscule used section. Istiklal Cad. 389, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/293-6968.** www.rob389.com. Funicular or Nostalgic Tramway to Tünel.

CARPETS

When in Istanbul, my days are filled with powwows with carpet dealers proud to show me the thank-you letters received from Washington, D.C., insiders; foreign dignitaries; and vacationing journalists. I could easily list a handful of stores where I go regularly for a cup of tea, but that wouldn't be fair to the shop owners that I have yet to meet. And just because I gave my business card to someone as a courtesy in passing doesn't mean that I endorse his (and in the rarest of cases, her) shop. In fact, just because I mention a shop in a previous edition of *Frommer's Turkey* or *Frommer's Istanbul* doesn't necessarily mean I endorse them now. But if you take away only one piece of information from this page, it should be that profit margins on carpets can be huge, and that the breadth of that margin is really up to you. And because carpet-selling is such a major moneymaker in Turkey (in fact, so is selling ceramics and jewelry), everybody you encounter on the street has only one thing on his or her mind: sales. Toward this end, random locals will approach you on tourist-heavy streets offering information, access, or even romance (see "Important Tips for Single Women Travelers," in chapter 3). Accept the attention (or not) with a grain of salt; just be forewarned and forearmed.

So where do you find an honorable carpet seller? What's honorable? Accepting a smaller profit margin? Why should they if you're perfectly willing to pay? Ensuring that you're not sold a fake? Actually, the challenge for the potential buyer is not so much about avoiding fakes and scams, it's about not getting scalped. This doesn't diminish the value of the carpets, nor does it mean that all carpet sellers are dishonest. In fact, Istanbul is full of carpet salesmen whose singular goal is to sell the finest-quality, most beautiful specimens for the absolute highest price they can get. This is, after all, a business. And it's *your* business to be an educated consumer.

My dilemma is that as soon as I recommend a carpet seller, you will automatically be at a disadvantage, because 1) you and many others will move heaven and earth to buy at this location, thus tipping the scales of demand in favor of the seller, and 2) the seller will therefore lose the incentive to compete. The result? You lose. So what's a shopper to do? Recognize that buying a carpet is an extremely labor- and time-intensive activity, and rest assured that these salesmen will find you. Your best, and only defense, is to go armed with the best information you can get, and to recognize in advance that no matter what you do, you're going to pay more than you should.

Tips Carpet Price Comparison

With consumer prices rising in Turkey, carpet vendors have been traveling far and wide to collect the less expensive Turkic carpets from Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Özbekistan, Afghanistan, and the other -stans. Before you fork over thousands of dollars or pounds on one of these admittedly stunning pieces, compare prices at places like IKEA and at Worldstock, Overstock's site for global handicrafts (www.overstock.com). Some sellers even list on eBay, so you may want to do a search for recently sold merchandise to get the best reflection of the market price.

Deconstructing the Turkish Carpet

Turkish tribal rugs are divided into ***kilims,*** which are flat, woven rugs, and **carpets,** which are hand-knotted using a double or Gordian Knot, a technique unique to Anatolia that results in a denser, more durable product than the handmade single-knotted carpets found in other countries. *Kilims* are probably more recognizable, as they are inexpensive and sold abroad.

Four types of carpets are currently produced in Turkey. **Wool-on-wool** carpets represent the oldest tradition in tribal rugs and are representative of a wide range of Anatolian regions. The earliest examples display geometric designs using natural dyes that were reliant on local resources like plants, flowers, twigs, and even insects, so that the colors of the carpets reflected the colors of an individual region. Blues and reds are typical of designs originating around Bergama, which derive from the indigo root and local insects. Reds seem to be dominant in carpets made in Cappadocia. The oranges and beiges of the Üşak are also becoming more popular among consumers.

Today the business of carpet weaving has been transformed into a mass industry. Weavers have for the most part switched over to chemical-based dyes, although the tradition of organic dyes is experiencing a rapid renaissance.

The second type of carpet is the highly prized **silk-on-silk** samples, which developed in response to the Ottoman Palace's increasing desire for quality and splendor. Silk was a precious commodity imported from China that few

CERAMICS

The **Istanbul Handicrafts Center** (under "Traditional Crafts") has a choice collection of precious ceramic and porcelain reproductions from Kütahya and Iznik.

Art House Shop owner Fereç Zan sells a spectacular variety of urns and fireplace ornaments in his tiny shop in the Cebeci Han. Completed ceramic bowls are flown in from Kutahya, and the copper is hand worked on-site in the workshop on the second level at the back of the adjacent Iç Cebeci Han. Modest-sized urns sell for around 75TL, significantly less than the 220 *of whatever currency* they care to quote in the Arasta Bazaar. Yağlıçılar Cad., Cebeci Han 17, Grand Bazaar. ✆ **0212/526-5509.** Tram: Beyazıt or Çemberlitaş.

Iznik Foundation Having revived the Ottoman-era craft of Iznik tile making, the Iznik Foundation is now selling its wares. The trick was identifying the chemical process for achieving the vibrant blue and green pigmentation of the originals. One of the criteria was that the ceramic "canvas" had to be composed of up to 80% quartz. This shop sells hand-painted tiles, platters, urns, and other household decorative items and tableware. Öksüz Çocuk Sok. 7, Kuruçeşme/Beşiktaş. ✆ **0212/287-3243.** www.iznik.com. Bus: 22, 22RE, 25E, 40, 40T, or 42T.

COPPER

Çadırcılar Caddesi If you simply have to have a set of those white copper *hamam* bowls or a copper platter for a table *à la Turque,* root around the slightly disheveled stalls

could afford. In the 19th century the sultan established a royal carpet-weaving center at **Hereke** that catered exclusively to the palace. Today silk-on-silk rugs continue to outclass all others, using silk from Bursa woven into reproductions of traditional designs. (***Note:*** Silk threads cannot hold natural dyes.) Silk rugs are also produced in **Kayseri,** but these have yet to attain the high aesthetic standards set by the Herekes.

A more recent development in carpet production has been the **wool-on-cotton,** which, because of the lower density of the [cotton] weft, accommodates a higher ratio of knots per inch, and therefore more detail in the design. Carpets of this type come from **Kayseri, Konya (Lakık),** and **Hereke. Cotton-on-cotton** is an even newer invention, duplicating the resolution and sheen of a silk rug without the expense.

Sales tactics include an emphasis on Anatolian carpet and *kilim* weaving as a high art. This certainly applies to rare and older pieces, which command hefty sums. But modern samples—albeit handmade copies of traditional designs—are created from computerized diagrams. (This last caveat does not apply to the more recent trend of designing patchwork rugs made from old village textiles.)

Finally, unless you're an expert, you should avoid buying antique rugs, which cost significantly more, and will present some challenges with Customs. The bottom line is that only antiques experts are equipped for a proper appraisal.

near the book bazaar—that is, if you aren't going to Ankara, where copper is king. Çadırcılar Cad. (past the entrance to the book bazaar near the Grand Bazaar), Grand Bazaar. Tram: Beyazıt or Çemberlitaş.

Zaer-iş Every piece of copper in this tiny shop is hand-worked, from the decorative serveware, to the copper trays, to the folksy trinkets. Prices here are (currently) about one-third of what you'll pay elsewhere. Mimar Sinan Cad., Şafak Han 40/E, Süleymaniye. ✆ **0212/520-2507.** Tram: Beyazıt.

DEPARTMENT STORES & CHAINS

So you've packed for warmer weather and the winds from the Caucasus have arrived a bit early. Head for these chains, located along Istiklal Caddesi, though you'll find them in major shopping areas throughout the country. If you've got champagne taste, you may want to keep your eyes open for some of Turkey's higher-end fashion franchises such as **Sarar, Ipekyol,** and **Abdullah Kiğılı.**

Beyman Beyman is Turkey's answer to Ralph Lauren, without the horsy patch. There's absolutely nothing cheesy about this store, which carries casual chic for men and women as well as housewares worthy of a museum. The Beymen Mega Store in Akmerkez (see "Malls & Shopping Centers," later in this chapter) is more along the lines of an upscale department store, where you can find cosmetics, stationery, and even furniture. Abdi Ipekçi Cad. 23/1,

 Nişantaşı. ✆ **0212/343-4800.** Akmerkez AVM, Etilerl. ✆ **0212/316-6900.** Galleria AVM, Ataköy. ✆ **0212/559-3250.** Istinye Park AVM, Istinye. ✆ **0212/335-6700.** www.beymen.com.tr.

Mavi Jeans If Gap is the jeans store to the U.S., then Mavi Jeans is Turkey's answer to bluejeans (although the brand makes a sporadic appearance in upscale stores outside of Turkey). Mavi Jeans recently launched an organic collection of jeans, T-shirts, and sweat shirts made entirely of 100% Aegean cotton. None of the fabrics are prewashed, so keep these babies far from the dryer. Dozens of stores are around town and in all major shopping streets and malls, including Akmerkez, City's, Nişantaşı, Istinye Park, and Sariyer (see "Malls & Shopping Centers," later in this chapter). Istiklal Cad. 117, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/249-3758.** www.mavi.com.

Vakko For the best designer men's and women's wear, check out Vakko, Turkey's answer to Barney's New York and worth a look if only for its dazzling scarves rivaling anything Hermès does. There are a number of locations, including at the airport, in Kanyon Shopping Center, on Bağdat Caddesi, and its new flagship store in the Galleria Shopping Center. The V2K line is a hipper version of its parent, with locations in Nişantaşı and at Kanyon mall. Akmerkez Shopping Center. Nispetiye Cad., Etiler. ✆ **0212/282-0695.** Istinye Park AVM. ✆ **0212/345-5832.** Galleria AVM, Sahilyolu, Ataköy. ✆ **0212/661-5942.** Kanyon AVM, Mecediyeköy Mah., Büyükdere, Levent. ✆ **0212/353-1080.** Bağdat Cad. 422, Suadiye. ✆ **0216/416-4204.** www.vakko.com.tr.

FOOD

Galatasaray Fish Market (Balıkpazarı) True, the Balıkpazarı is a great big tourist trap, but as a jumble of over 25 fish and fresh-produce vendors, as well as a handful of traditional *meyhanes* and the odd seller of dashboard ornaments, it's also an undeniable hoot. While in the Balıkpazarı, keep your eyes peeled in the various markets for vacuum-packed bunches of **sele olives**—soak them in hot water to dilute the saltiness, and then serve these precious little pieces of fruit with olive oil, lemon, and a sprinkle of oregano. Be sure to weave your way through the narrow **Avrupa Pasajı** in the Balıkpazarı, a narrow gallery of artsy shops selling souvenirs from antique samovars to tiny harem outfits for 2-year-olds (plus merchandise like brass pepper mills at prices lower than in the Egyptian Spice Market). Istiklal Cad., opposite Galatasaray High School (near intersection of Meşrutiyet Cad.), Galatasaray, Beyoğlu. Nostalgic Tramway: Galatasaray.

Tips Something Smells Fishy

Beware of anything labeled caviar. Turkey is notorious for its illegal trade in smuggled caviar, as well as for representing this lower-quality replacement fish roe as high-quality caviar using counterfeit labels copied from reputable brands.

Hacı Bekir For the most extensive variety of Turkish delight, stop into this legendary sweet shop with locations in Beyoğlu and Eminönü. Istiklal Cad. 129, Taksim, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/244-2804.** Hamidiye Cad. 81–83, Eminönü. ✆ **0212/522-0666.** www.hacibekir.com.tr. Tram: Eminönü.

Kurukahveci Mehmet Coffee addicts should head to this corner behind the spice bazaar. A producer of the infamous precious brew of thick, Turkish coffee, Kurukahveci Mehmet is also the best-known retail outlet. Products also include espresso beans and cocoa. Tahmis Sok. 66, Eminönü. ✆ **0212/511-4262.** www.mehmetefendi.com. Tram: Eminönü.

Olive Oil: Anatolia's Black Gold

Turkey's **olive oil** really doesn't get the kind of respect it deserves—an absence of effective marketing has deprived the rest of the world of one of the country's most treasured resources. But that is changing, by the looks of the gourmet shop in the airport's duty-free area. If you've been bewitched by the flaxen temptress at the bottom of your meze bowl, pick up a bottle at any local convenience-type store. The grocery-store chains carry some basic brands like Komili as well as some more premium brands like Amphora, Tariş, and Olivos.

La Cave What better symbol that Turkey's wines have arrived than a boutique storefront? La Cave stocks a teasing collection of Turkey's showcase wines, at prices much lower than what you'll find at the airport. You'll also find wines and spirits from all over the world, but remember that the higher the alcohol content, the higher you'll pay in Turkish tax (a common Woodbridge Cabernet was selling for 65TL—ouch). Sıraselviler Cad., 109/A, Cihangir. ✆ **0212/243-2405.** www.lacavesarap.com. Bus, metro, Nostalgic Tramway, or tram/funicular to Taksim.

Namlı Gurme Gida Ferry passengers heading home and local workers and artisans crowd the cash register of Namlı, a specialty food purveyor stocking quality items such as olive oils, cheeses, *helva,* dried fruit, honey, and nuts, many of which are packaged and ready to go. Namlı is renowned for their *pastırma* and deli meats, as well as Kars cheese. They even carry items an extended visitor might not want to be without: HP sauce or Casa Fiesta salsa. The covered outdoor cafe is packed with lunchtime folk or commuters waiting for their ferries to board. It's open Monday to Saturday, 6:30am to 10:30pm. Rıhtım Cad. 1/1 (under the car park), Karaköy. ✆ **0212/293-6880.** www.namligida.com.tr. Tram: Karaköy.

GIFTS & SOUVENIRS

Anatolian Dolls For the collector, or as a gift, folk dolls representing the various Anatolian cultural traditions make the perfect gift. Traditionally dressed dolls sell for 25 to 45TL in this not-just-your-basic toy store for girls. Fuat Paşa Cad. 39, Mercan/Beyazıt. ✆ **0212/519-8305.** www.anatoliandolls.com. Tram: Beyazıt.

Aynez Whatever you call them—water pipes, hookahs, *nargile* or bongs—the fact is that they make great conversation pieces. You don't have to go far to find one either: These eye-catching ceramic ones with Ottoman-style foliage or the tinted glass *nargiles* feature prominently around town. What Aynez does is sell them literally at a third of what you'd pay in the Grand Bazaar (compare 15TL to 45TL for the smallest ones). Fuat Paşa Cad. Havancı Sok. 6 (steps from the Grand Bazaar), Mercan. ✆ **0542/325-1137.** Tram: Beyazıt.

Beşiktaş, Fenerium, Galatasaray Store The soccer (sorry, football) craze being what it is, no closet would be complete without Galatasaray's yellow stripes or Fenerbahçe's blue and gold. Inka Sportif has them all and more, but perhaps for prudence (you know how football fans can get), each team's colors are sold in separately branded stores. Fenerbahçe fans go to Fenerium, there are Beşiktaş stores for fans of that team, and the Galatasaray Store caters to some of the city's hardest-core fans. For your own safety, I've listed them separately (and only the most convenient locations) here. Beşiktaş, Yeniçeriler

 Cad. 14, Çemberlitaş/Fatih. ✆ **0212/526-1903.** Feneriuim (✆ **0212/519-1092**) and Galatasaray (✆ **0212/513-0539**), Makasçilar Cad. 14/14. Metro: Karşısı, Beyazıt/Fatih.

Levant Koleksiyon Old and new Ottoman and Turkish memorabilia clutters this tiny shop on Tünel Meydanı. Here you'll find calligraphic prints, maps, engravings, and postcards, both framed and unframed. Tünel Meydanı 8, Tünel (opposite the Tünel exit). ✆ **0212/293-6333.** www.levantkoleksiyon.com. Funicular or Nostalgic Tramway to Tünel.

T Shop A mini-department store selling cosmetics, hair and body care, and lots of kitschy gold vases and urns, but the interesting stuff is upstairs, where you can undercut the tourist price for a handmade ceramic plate by more than 50% (or 97TL for a 38cm/15 in.–diameter platter with a tree of life motif). Yeniçeriler Cad. 101, Çemberlitaş. ✆ **0212/458-6365.** Tram: Çemberlitaş.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

La Vie en Rose If you are tense, prone to migraines, or suffering from any number of ailments, modern-day alchemist Jayda Uras can whip up a natural remedy of flower essences, herbs, and other healing agents. Jayda's English is perfect—a must for teasing out a foreigner's underlying ailment. She uses only organic products and custom blends all tinctures. Yeni Yuva Sok. 50/a, Cihangir. ✆ **0212/252-0907.** Tram: Kabataş; Funicular: Taksim; Nostalgic Tramway: Taksim; Metro: Taksim; Bus: 25T, 35C, 40, 54HT, 55T, 61B, 80T, 87, 93T, 96T, 559C, or E50.

HOME

Beymen Home One could easily spend thousands of Turkish Lira in this contemporary home shop a la Ralph Lauren or Calvin Klein. Here you'll find sleekly designed tableware, Ottoman-style copper serving platters, and sumptuously simple furniture. The Akmerkez location also sells Hiref designs (see below). Abdi Ipekçi Cad. 23/1, Nişantaşı. ✆ **0212/373-4800.** www.beymen.com.tr. Metro: Osmanbey; Bus 30M from Beşiktaş, 43 from Taksim.

Design Z one Designer Özlem Tuna displays her delicious designs as well as the handiwork of other notable Istanbul artisans in this little shop off Nuruosmaniye Caddesi. The motifs are familiar to the Turkish eye, featuring icons like the tulip or the evil eye in innovative ways. Expect to find things like coffee/tea services and all manner of eye-catching and bejeweled bowls. Alibaba Türbe Sok. Feyzullah Işhanı 21/4, Nuruosmaniye. ✆ **0212/527-9285.** www.ozlemtuna.coml Tram: Çemberlitaş.

Hiref With the vision of "design your culture," Hiref takes the traditional and fuses contemporary design sensibilities. The result? Simply stunning spiral glass "Beykoz" vases; covered silver platters; copper tureens; and marble candleholders, each with its own motif reminiscent of a Cappadocia cave, a high sufi-style felt fez, a tulip, or the pleasingly ubiquitous Turkish crescent and star. Istinye Park AVM, 4th floor. ✆ **0212/345-6038.** www.hiref.com.tr. Kanyon AVM Floor B2. ✆ **0212/353-5450.** Metro: Osmanbey; Bus 30M from Beşiktaş, 43 from Taksim.

Mudo A sort of cross between Pottery Barn and Next, Mudo carries stylish housewares and very wearable clothing for men and women. A Mudo Outlet is now located in the Egyptian Spice Bazaar. Teşvikiye Cad. 149, Nişantaşı. ✆ **0212/456-0707.** www.mudo.com.tr. Also on Istiklal Cad., and in the Akmerkez Shopping Center, Nispetiye Cad., Etiler.

Paşabahçe The nationwide chain (with 15 outlets in Istanbul alone) has recently begun making a name overseas for its elegant ceramics, hand-cut glass, and typically

Ottoman tableware. The more precious pieces are trimmed in silver or gold plate. The store also stocks everyday tableware, but that's not the stuff you're going to carry home. Istiklal Cad. 314, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/244-5694.** www.pasabahce.com. Nostalgic Tramway to Galatasaray.

JEWELRY

Eller Art Gallery Providing a more down-to-earth showcase for wearable art is this workshop (at the back) and gallery on a side street of Beyoğlu. These very Turkish designs are the work of Nurhan Acun, a 1957 graduate of the State Academy of Fine Arts. His pieces are inspired by jewelry and other artifacts normally seen under protective glass at Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, and in fact, have been commissioned by the very museums that have served as his muse. Istiklal Cad., Postacılar Sok. 12, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/249-2364.** http://ellerartgallery.wordpress.com. Nostalgic Tramway to Odakule.

Pegasus For decorative (but not too much) silver pendants, rings, and earrings, this tiny storefront in Ortaköy is one of my favorites, and it's also gentle on the wallet. Muallim Naci Cad., Yelkovan Sok. 3/B, Ortaköy. ✆ **0212/258-7485.** Bus: 22, 22RE, 25E, 40, 40T, or 42T.

Urart Ateliers Urart is an upscale workshop complex of designers, artists, and craftspeople dedicated to re-creating the rich traditions of Anatolian civilizations in gold and silver. Urart's precious (and costly) creations are available to the public in the label's exclusive boutique in Nişantaşı. Some of their pieces are also available in the small gift shop in Topkapı Palace, in the last courtyard, and in hotels around town. Abdi Ipekçi Cad. 18/1, Nişantaşı. ✆ **0212/246-7194.** Metro: Osmanbey; Bus 30M from Beşiktaş, 43 from Taksim. Also in the Swissôtel, Bayildim Cad. 2, Maçka. ✆ **0212/629-0478.** The Sofa Hotel, Teşvikiye Caddesi 41, Nişantaşı. ✆ **0212/368-1818.** www.urart.com.tr.

LEATHER GOODS

Derimod Locally crafted leather shoes, bags, and jackets for both men and women are sold under this Turkish national brand. Merchandise is made of fine-quality hides and crafted into traditional forms. Akmerkez Shopping Center, Nispetiye Cad., Etiler. ✆ **0212/282-0668** and in shopping malls around town. www.derimod.com.tr. Bus: 43R, 559C, 58N, 59A, 59C, 59R, or others; Metro: Levent, then take a taxi.

Kıyıcı Genuine Fake Bags Just because these are not the originals doesn't mean they're of inferior quality or you're not going to need a full wallet to walk out of here with a little morsel. GFB carries Prada (with bargaining that begins at $250), Louis Vuitton, and other big-name knockoffs. Grand Bazaar. From Beyazıt gate, to the right of the Kürkçüler Han. ✆ **212/526-5181.** Tram: Beyazıt or Çemberlitaş.

Prens Leather You won't get much of a bargain at this high-profile boutique, but you will get quality and reliability. The store stocks a limited collection of its own designs, but they'll gladly piece together a custom jacket. Vezirhan Cad. 68, Nuruosmaniye (near the Nuruosmaniye Gate entrance to the Grand Bazaar). ✆ **0212/522-0570.** www.prensleather.com. Tram: Beyazıt or Çemberlitaş.

Trust Leather A more compact and personalized version of Prens, this relatively new leather shop outside the Arasta Bazaar has basic outerwear plus some pretty impressive reproductions—think made-to-order, blinged-out bomber jacket from a magazine photo (she paid $270). Küçükayasofya Cad. 8, Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/458-5343.** Tram: Sultanahmet.

TEXTILES

Abdulla Natural Products Thou shall not covet these incredibly thick and plush towels. With two locations in and around the Grand Bazaar, Abdulla stocks goods like deliciously textured bath sheets, herbal olive-oil soaps, and all of the accouterments for a home-style *hamam* (silk *pestamal,* hand mitt, and so on). Halıcılar Cad. 62, Grand Bazaar. ✆ **0212/527-3684.** And Ali Baba Turbe Sok. 25/27, Nuruosmaniye. ✆ **0212/526-3070.** www.abdulla.com. Tram: Beyazıt or Çemberlitaş.

Artyama Aytekin Evcan is a self-taught artisan with a background in carpet and textile repair. His venture builds on the current craze for patchwork carpets by infusing his own designs inspired by Ottoman motifs. Tulips are the primary theme, applied on everything from carpets, *kilims,* pillows, bags, and blankets and crafted from reclaimed wool (mostly curtains from homes in the heartland), cotton, or linen. Prices are 50€ to 70€ per square meter. Kadirga Liman Cad. 122, Kumkapı. ✆ **0532/454-5529.** Tram: Beyazıt or Çemberlitaş.

Derviş New ethnic fabrics created based on the traditional villages around Anatolia fill the shelves of this stall in the Grand Bazaar. Samples include a silk-on-silk embroidered man's shawl (700TL)—the type worn by an Ottoman *zeybek* (parallel image of a Mafioso type); a raw silk waffle-texture bedsheet, a small collection of raw cotton *peştemels,* and handwoven linen towels. Keseçiler Cad. 33–35, and Halıcılar Cad. 5, Grand Bazaar (near the Iç Bedesten). ✆ **0212/514-4525** or 528-7883. Tram: Beyazıt or Çemberlitaş.

Eğin Tekstil This shop has been in the family for so long that Dr. Süleyman (a real medical doctor) proudly displays the *firman,* or order of Sultan Abdülhamid II—the equivalent to a license to operate. But that's not even his claim to fame: When a team

Malls & Shopping Centers

You'd really have to have a lot of time on your hands in Istanbul to wind up at one of these shopping centers, but sometimes the lure of the fluorescent lighting and the chill of overtaxed air-conditioning is just too much to resist. The **Akmerkez Mall,** in Etiler, was actually voted the best shopping mall in Europe several years back; but a decade later, it's slated for major renovations just to keep up with the ever-growing pool of über-deluxe competition. **Istinye Park** is an urban re-creation of a village catering to those accustomed to the stratospheres of commerce, and **Astoria** boasts not only commerce but luxury wellness with its on-site Anantara Spa, luxury fitness facility, and adjunct Kempinski Residences. Certainly more convenient is the center-city, Bloomingdales-esque **City's,** an indoor emporium of top brands (Gian Franco Ferre, Roberto Cavalli, D&G, Jean Paul Gaultier) in the tony neighborhood of Nişantaşı. The outdoor **Kanyon** is only a couple of years old, a Guggenheim-esque swirl of tasteful Turkish franchises and one-of-a-kinders in the smart neighborhood of Levent, opposite yet another shopping mecca, **Metrocity.** Other shopping malls include **Capitol Shopping Mall** in Üsküdar, **Carousel Shopping Mall** in Bakırköy, and **Galleria Shopping Mall** near the airport. **Olivium** is a mostly outlet mall located halfway between the airport and Sultanahmet, where you can find various middle-of-the-range name brands at discounted prices.

Tips Your VAT Refund

Foreigners (and Turkish citizens with residence abroad) are entitled to a VAT (value-added tax) refund, worth 18% of the total amount of merchandise acquired during any one purchase. One word of caution, though: There's an ongoing scam where a merchant will ask you to sign an invoice (written in Turkish) that actually states you have already received your VAT refund at the point of purchase. Imagine handing over your paperwork at the airport (including the receipt with your signature) only to learn that you have essentially waived your own right to the refund without knowing it. Simply put: Don't sign anything you can't read.

To receive a refund, present the merchandise and receipt to the Customs inspectors on your way out of the country (but within 3 months of purchase). Refunds are issued in the form of either a Global Refund check, redeemable at the Iş Bankası branch on the Arrivals level, or as a credit to a credit card account. The Customs Tax-Free office at the airport in Istanbul, located in the International Departure Terminal, is open 24 hours a day. They take a commission, though, so that 18% gets reduced to about 12.5%—hardly worth the wait unless we're talking about major-ticket items.

with the film *Troy* was looking for period textiles, particularly woolens, they came here. Yağlıkçilar Cad. 1 (at the Örücüler Kapısı entrance), Grand Bazaar. ✆ **0212/528-2618.** Tram: Beyazıt or Çemberlitaş.

EthniCon You can't read an architectural magazine these days without bumping into merchandise made here. Ethnicon puts a contemporary twist on a tribal-art tradition by collecting bags, curtains, and other utilitarian objects made from sturdy wool textiles (even burlap) from around the southeast of Turkey, and then has the remnants arranged into a "quilted carpet" by a professional designer. The concept is very popular among local architects; you'll see Ethnicon products adorning places like the Sumahan Hotel, Conran's, and Restoration Hardware. Pieces are fixed and priced by the square meter (at $220). Kapalıcarsı Takkeciler Sok. 58–60, Grand Bazaar. ✆ **0212/527-6841.** www.ethnicon.com. Tram: Beyazıt or Çemberlitaş.

TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

Caferağa Medresesi Like the Cedid Mehmet Efendi Medresesi housing the Istanbul Handicrafts Center, this recently restored Ottoman-era seminary is now, too, the home of a handicrafts center. But the managers of the Caferağa setup have taken the concept to the next level: They run a whole slew of visitor's workshops set in and around a picturesque garden cafe. Just outside the *medrese* (access is down a few steps off of Caferiye Sok.) is the art gallery annex, where works created by affiliated artists (watercolors, calligraphy, ebru, abstract art, and jewelry) are for sale. Prices start around 60TL and average around 80TL to 100TL. Caferiye Sok. Soğukuyu Çıkmazı 1, Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/513-3601.** Tram: Sultanahmet or Gülhane.

Istanbul Handicrafts Center (Istanbul Sanatları Çarşısı) In another one of its commendable preservationist projects, the Touring and Automobile Club of Turkey has provided an outlet for the revival of Turkish and Ottoman crafts. Each room off the central courtyard of this restored 17th-century *medrese* serves as an atelier for a different craft. Here you can watch the creation of handmade treasures, including hand-painted silks, folk art dolls and puppets, gilded calligraphy and miniatures, fine porcelain reproductions, and modern examples of the art of *ebru,* or marbled paper. The center is open year-round, although you may have to knock on some doors to get a personal shopping tour during the off season. Better yet, their fixed pricing takes the guesswork out of buying. Kabasakal Cad. (the side street next to the Derviş Tea Garden and across from the Blue Mosque), Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/517-6780.** www.istanbulyesilev.com. Tram: Sultanahmet.

10

Istanbul After Dark

Primarily a destination for those seeking historical enrichment and a taste of the exotic, Istanbul presents itself to visitors in a number of unexpected ways. One of those ways is as a sophisticated, citified, cosmopolitan denizen of the night. When the sun sets and the spotlights go on, Istanbul squeezes into a slinky black dress and invites its various and varied communities along for the ride. Dozens of rooftop lounges and exclusive Bosphorus-front restaurants are transformed into the living rooms of the smart set. Informal and sometimes raucous restaurants or tavernas teem with the pent-up energy of the long workweek. Students gyrate to the futuristic sounds of techno music while some of their classmates, with arms raised in the air, snap their fingers to the percussive rhythms of traditional Anatolian folk music. The energy is palpable, and as new and innovative nighttime destinations open up weekly, Istanbul is fast becoming a credible rival to Europe's other nightlife meccas.

1 TAKING IN TURKISH NIGHTLIFE

A typical evening on the town will involve large amounts of food accompanied by even greater amounts of *rakı,* that aniseed-flavored spirit known as "lion's milk"—traditionally consumed in a ***meyhane,*** a tavern or pub where patrons gather to eat and drink. Where *meyhanes* were once the realm of men only, today they are a hybrid of the lively taverna and sophisticated restaurant, the most popular ones found primarily in the back streets of Beyoğlu. On summer evenings, the main dining room moves to the rooftops (if it's not already there), where guests are treated to the twinkling lights of a timeless city.

The ***şaraphane*** or wine bar and the counterpart to the ***birahane,*** or beer hall, is a more recent nightlife trend in Istanbul thanks to the ever-improving quality of Turkey's wines.

Live music is a staple of Turkish nightlife, and Istanbul's cafes, clubs, and Turkish Houses *(Türkü Evleri)* all provide inroads to the niche of your choice, be it jazz, pop, funk, rock, techno, or traditional Turkish folk music. Bars, cafes, and nightclubs in Istanbul are generally not categorized according to the type of music they play, choosing to book instead groups with different styles from night to night. A good rule of thumb is: the earlier the hour, the softer the music. Rock and pop resounds onto Istiklal Caddesi, where bars, cafes, and clubs, a few of them seedy, are too numerous to cover. Another good rule is to avoid spots with neon lights and security guards and anything with the word "nightclub" or "club" in the name, as these have the reputation of being the seedy places where bad things happen to good visitors.

Türkü Evleri are cozy little cafe/restaurants that book Turkish folk musicians performing typical Anatolian ballads to the accompaniment of the *saz* and drums. Clustered around Büyükparmakkapı Sokak in Beyoğlu, the cafes also serve basic Anatolian fare in a cozy setting, usually a narrow room with banquettes lining the two walls with just enough of an open aisle in the center for dancing as the hours wane.

The Rhythm of the Night

A certain rhythm predicts the way things roll out after dark in this great metropolis. The choices run the gamut to bars, restaurants, live music venues, dance clubs, tea gardens, water-pipe cafes (serving a menu of fragrant tobacco for use in a *nargile* or hookah pipe), and a variety of publike locales. More often than not, there is significant overlap. For example, the popular Bosphorus nightclub Reina has three restaurants and a number of bars on several open-air levels. At the traditional *Türkü Evi,* live Turkish folk music can more often than not be appreciated while dining on mezes, grills, and sautés. Tea gardens are often also water-pipe cafes. See "Taking in Turkish Nightlife," p. 225, for a description of the different types of nightlife options.

As mentioned in chapter 6, most restaurants move the dining upstairs to the rooftop in the warmer months. Some restaurants and nightclubs with locations "in town" (usually in Beyoğlu) move the action up to a space along the Bosphorus in summer.

Cover charges ("*küver*") are customary for admission to nightclubs, but usually kick in only after 11pm or midnight. The cover charge is generally waived for guests with reservations at one of the in-club restaurants, which start serving dinner around 7pm. The atmosphere at this earlier hour is usually romantic, candlelit, and seductive. As the evening wears on, the music becomes edgier and louder. Most of the musical venues or concert halls also charge admission;

Meanwhile, no denizen of the night will be able to look him/herself in the mirror without having stood at the velvet ropes of one of Istanbul's **mega-clubs on the Bosphorus.** While different years find these multiplexes with ever-evolving names, the themes and locations stay the same and invariably involve multiple candlelit restaurants, numerous bars, a dance floor, strobe lights, and fresh breezes off the Bosphorus, only inches away.

Clubs that book popular musical acts may sell tickets or impose a cover charge where normally there is none, but unless the headliner is very popular, tickets to most performing-arts events and concerts can be purchased at the location the day of the performance. For tickets to the city's main events, contact Biletix (a Ticketmaster company; ✆ **0216/556-9800;** www.biletix.com).

Hotel lounges or **rooftop bars** provide a mesmerizing alternative to wall-to-wall smoke-filled cafes. All over the city, splendidly romantic views present themselves from almost every rooftop, or you can succumb to the dubious appeal of one of the several **Turkish Night shows** around town.

The neighborhood of **Ortaköy** is particularly vibrant on summer evenings, when streets lined with outdoor vendors selling crafts, jewelry, and the like create a festival atmosphere. Hip waterside restaurants and coffeehouses are open until late, or you can graze through the stalls of food and gorge yourself on stuffed mussels.

tickets are generally sold at the box office or via **Biletix** (www.biletix.com), a sister company of Ticketmaster. As for closing hours, there rarely are any—although a club may advertise a closing time of 4am, the truth is that sometimes the party just lasts longer.

So now it's 4am, your eardrums are busted, and you're ready to go home. **Taxis** wait outside the entrance to the Bosphorus nightclubs, but you can also ask inside for the manager or maitre d' to call you one. In Beyoğlu, depending on the location and distance of your hotel, you can either walk or grab a taxi at one of the numerous taxi stands around the district. Taxi ranks in Beyoğlu include those in Taksim Square and on Meşrutiyet Caddesi near the Pera Palace Hotel; you can also walk over 2 short blocks to the busy Tarlabaşı Caddesi and hail one.

Nighttime in Sultanahmet is a bit more sober, although the restaurants, tea gardens, and water-pipe cafes provide more than an ample number of choices. By 10pm in the Old City, the streets have already gone quiet; it's pretty safe to walk around (or back to your hotel), preferably in pairs, but it's also best to stay in areas that are well lit. If "home" is in Beyoğlu, the tram operates until midnight or 12:30. Unfortunately, the taxis waiting at taxi ranks, particularly in Sultanahmet, are predators, so best to have someone (a hotel receptionist, your waiter, your carpet salesman) call you one.

GAY ISTANBUL

Although homosexuality can be traced back to Ottoman times, a stigma is still attached to it: Indeed, the worst insult used among Turks (especially at soccer games) is *ibne,* a term referring to the receiving partner in a same-sex act. So while practically speaking, homosexuality in Turkey is legal between consenting partners above the age of 18, the growing LGBT community endures a whole host of societal discrimination. But as elsewhere, it's slowly, incrementally getting better. For more specific information on gay- and lesbian-friendly venues, log onto **www.istanbulgay.com**.

Barbahçe The pioneer among gay bars in Istanbul, Barbahçe is the grand dame of same-sex clubs, attracting the hip, young, and beautiful. Dance parties and theme events are organized on weekends, while regular diversions include barmen cocktail shots. Sıraselviler Cad., Soğancı Sok. 3/1, Cihangir. ✆ **0212/245-1718.** Sun, Wed, and Thurs 10pm–4am; Fri–Sat 10pm–5am. Metro, bus, Nostalgic Tramway, or tram/funicular to Taksim.

Chianti This fairly new addition to the LGBT scene provides a smart, relaxed atmosphere with lower decibel levels than at its counterparts. It bills itself as "gay exclusive." Balo Sok. 31/2, Galatasaray. ✆ **0212/293-3022.** Daily 4pm–2am. Metro, bus, or tram/funicular to Taksim; Nostalgic Tramway from Taksim or Tünel to Galatasaray.

Sugarclub Café A pretty low-key spot with a cool vibe where the girls can congregate alfresco (or indoors when there's a chill in the air) prior to a night on the town, the Sugarclub is the oldest gay cafe in town. Not surprisingly, it's a popular meeting point for

Tips Safety for Single Men

Scenario #1: You're wandering around Taksim and pop into a bar for a quick beer or two. Before you know it, you're surrounded by lovely women and even doted on by the owner. But 2 hours and two beers later, the check arrives: $500. I wish that were a typo. Refuse to pay, and the big boys come out of the woodwork; you may even find your life and limb threatened. It's startling how many times this scenario plays out in seemingly innocuous-looking "establishments" around Taksim. One way to counter, I suppose, is to dispute the charge with your credit card carrier once the bill comes in. But the best way to handle the situation is to avoid it altogether. Stay away from anything with neon and the word "nightclub" or "club" in the sign. But sadly, there is no absolute guarantee. When in doubt, follow the advice of this guidebook, or stick to the hotel bars.

Scenario #2: You're taking an innocent evening stroll through the back streets of Sultanahmet. Suddenly, you are accosted by four young boys who identify themselves as police. Having done nothing wrong and always mindful that you are in a foreign country, you cooperate. They manhandle you (perhaps looking for ID, or even drugs) and then send you packing with a shove. It all happens so fast, except that now your wallet is empty. Unfortunately, with the migration of organized crime, nowhere is safe anymore. Don't walk anywhere alone, and avoid badly lit streets after dark.

Scenario #3: You're out and about or at a bar and you've managed to connect with some very friendly and cool locals. Next thing you know it's the next morning, and you're *sans* wallet, camera, or whatever, stranded and groggy in some sleazy hotel. You can avoid this by walling yourself off in a protective bubble, or you can never, ever let your drink sit unsupervised by you or someone you trust.

gays and a pretty good information clearinghouse for what's on when. Istiklal Cad. Sakasalım Cikmazı 3/A (near Gloria Jeans Café), Tepebaşı. ✆ **0212/245-0096.** www.sugar-cafe.com. Daily 11am–1am. Nostalgic Tramway from Taksim or Galatasaray; bus to Tepebaşı.

2 THE PERFORMING ARTS

In addition to State opera, ballet, theater and philharmonic performances, concerts, and recitals are staged regularly in various venues around town, including in the gloriously ancient Aya Irini (Hagia Irene) in Topkapı Palace and the Cemal Reşit Rey Concert Hall (✆ **0212/232-9830;** www.crrks.org). Iş Bank also maintains a prestigious cultural center, including a number of galleries and an 800-seat concert hall in the Iş towers in Levent (✆ **0212/316-1083;** www.issanat.com). For a comprehensive schedule of performances, check out the government's website at **www.kultur.gov.tr** or log onto the venues' websites for upcoming events. **Biletix** (www.biletix.com), the Turkish arm of Ticketmaster, is also a good starting point for upcoming concerts. The Mymerhaba expat website (**www.mymerhaba.com**) is also a great resource for real-time listings of performances and events in Istanbul.

Istanbul Biennial 2011

Istanbul has been celebrating a **Biennial** since 1987, but it wasn't until 2005, perhaps because of the anchorage of the new Istanbul Modern Museum, that the Biennial hit a home run. Artists were clustered around the revived neighborhood of Galata in venues that included an old apartment block, a tobacco depot, a Customs warehouse, and an office building. Previous exhibitions were housed in the Imperial Mint, in the Kız Kulesi (Maiden's Tower), in SantralIstanbul (a former electric generating plant; p. 167), in the Customs *"antrepo"* warehouse buildings in Kayaköy, on the Bosphorus Bridge, and in Çemberlitaş Hamamı.

For information on venues, tickets, and artists, contact the **Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Art** (✆ **0212/334-0700;** www.iksv.org).

The annual **International Istanbul Festival** (✆ **0212/334-0700;** www.iksv.org) is organized into four separate arts festivals averaging over 50 events yearly. The festival kicks off with the Film Festival in April, including two national and international competitions. Past festivals saw the screening of over 175 films in a variety of venues in Beyoğlu and Kadıköy. The theater section of the festival brings companies from all over Europe and takes place in May, with one or two offerings in English. At the end of October or in early November, selected international artists come together for the Biennial, but the big to-do takes place in June/July with the International Istanbul Music Festival, representing the worlds of opera, jazz, classical music, and ballet in evocative settings like the St. Irene, and featuring world-renowned performers like Wynton Marsalis or the traditional performance of *Der Entführung aus dem Serail (Abduction from the Seraglio)* appropriately staged in Topkapı Palace. A separate Jazz Festival, sponsored by Efes Pilsen, takes place in November in various venues around town, including local jazz clubs, cultural centers, and the open-air theater above Taksim. Tickets to all concerts and performances are available either at the box office or via **Biletix** (www.biletix.com).

THE CLASSICS

Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) Built originally as an opera house, Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) houses the **Istanbul State Opera and Ballet,** the **Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra,** and the **State Theatre Company.** During the summer months, AKM hosts the **Istanbul Arts Festival,** but because of high demand, tickets may be hard to come by. While renovation and modernization of the cultural center continue, performances will take place at alternative locations. For now, the Istanbul State Opera and Ballet is temporarily housed in the restored Süreyya Paşa building in Kadıköy, a lovely setting in an albeit moderately inconvenient location. Taksim Square, Taksim. ✆ **0212/251-5600.** Bus, metro, Nostalgic Tramway, or tram/funicular to Taksim.

Süreyya Oper a House The building was designed by parliamentarian Süreyya Ilmen between 1924 and 1927 as an opera house; however, no operas were ever staged here, as the incomplete building lacked a stage. Now the Kadıköy Municipality Süreyya Opera House hosts three performances a week of the **Istanbul State Opera and Ballet.** A box office is on-site, but tickets can also be purchased at the Atatürk Cultural Center. Showtimes are *generally* 8pm weekdays, 4pm on Saturdays, and 11am on Sundays. Tickets

 cost from 10TL for the nosebleed section to 30TL for orchestra seats. Eski Süreyya Sineması, Bahariye Cad. 29, Kadıköy. ✆ **0216/346-1531.** www.idobale.com. Ferry to Kadıköy then taxi to the concert hall.

LIVE MUSIC & NIGHTCLUBS

Babylon This club was the first among what is now a crowded category of venues for music concerts attended by hip and cosmopolitan Turks in black. Frequent live concerts feature every type of modern genre and then some: from urban folk, to world, to punk, to classic rock, to R&B, to 10 types of jazz. Previous acts saw jazz performers Charlie Hunter, Leon Parker, and Harriet Tubman, but more often than not, the musicians are lesser-known imports playing an eclectic (even weird) fusion of music. Tickets are 15TL for SRO up to 70TL for a table; DJ nights are free. Şehbender Sok. 3, Beyoğlu (from Istiklal Cad. near Tünel, turn onto Asmalımecit Sok. and left onto Şehbender). ✆ **0212/292-7368.** www.babylon.com.tr.

Nardis Jazz Club Finds This joint is so small, so intimate, and so New Orleans that you may have to pinch yourself to see if you are indeed in Istanbul. Reservations are essential for seating next to the tiny stage, although an additional handful of tables are up on the mezzanine. Live acts cover the full range of jazz interpretations, from classical to modern, to fusion to popular. Open Monday to Thursday 9:30pm to 12:30am, Friday and Saturday 10:30pm to 1:30am. Kuledibi Sok. 14, Galata. ✆ **0212/244-6327.** www.nardisjazz.com. Cover 25TL. Funicular: Upper or Lower Tünel then walk to club.

Garajistanbul A cutting-edge (avant-garde!) multimedia art center focused on showcasing the latest in theater, dance, music, and literature arts. Garajistanbul, itself a not-for-profit traveling company, features exhibitions and festivals in addition to the regular calendar of events. Yeni Çarşı Cad., Kaymakam Reşat Bey Sok. 11a, Galatasaray. ✆ **0212/244-4499.** www.garajistanbul.com. Tickets 9TL–30TL. Nostalgic Tramway to Galatasaray or walk from Taksim or Tünel.

Ghetto One of Istanbul's newer nightlife venues, Ghetto strives to fill your ears with salsa, reggae, bossa nova, or whatever act that day brings in. Plus, they've got an art gallery and a *meyhane*—both making the best use of the Beaux Arts Mario Cantoni building backdrop. The three-story lounge and entertainment complex is topped by a slick and smoky rooftop terrace. Tickets are on sale from Monday to Saturday 11am to 4pm and on the day of performance after 8pm and through Biletix (✆ **0216/556-9800;** www.biletix.com). Kamer Hatun Cad. 10 (1 block over from Meşrutiyet Cad. and opposite the British Consulate), Galatasaray. ✆ **0212/251-7501.** Cover 20TL, 25TL, or 30TL for live music, otherwise free.

Istanbul Jazz Center With a waterfront terrace for chill-out summer's eves, the Jazz Center, housed within the stylish Radisson Blu Hotel in Ortaköy wouldn't even need to host good musicians. But that they do, starting with the Mike Stern Band, who was the center's opening night act in 2005. Since then, the "JC" has skyrocketed to the top of the list of Istanbul's international jazz venues. Other jazz greats who've passed through JC include Branford Marsalis and Ernie Watts. Shows take place Tuesday through Saturday; reservations can be made directly via the website. Çırağan Cad., Salhane Sok. 10, Ortaköy in the Radisson Blu Hotel. ✆ **0212/327-5050.** www.istanbuljazz.com. Cover for a table 25TL (not including the 50TL per-person food minimum); SRO spot at the bar costs 20TL per set. The cover doubles for a full, two-set night. Tuesdays are free for ladies. Bus to Ortaköy.

TURKISH FOLKLORE

Galata Tower In spite of mediocre food and high prices, visitors continue to insist on a "traditional" Turkish folkloric show. Inevitably there's a belly dancer and perhaps a segment resembling a Cossack dance. The one at the Galata Tower at least comes with a fabulous view. The show runs Monday through Saturday. Dinner service begins at 8pm, followed by the folkloric show, which ends around midnight. Top floor of the Galata Tower. ✆ **0212/293-8180.** Admission 80€ (70€ if you pay in cash).

Istanbul Dance & Rhythm Ensemble A project of Istanbul Live Productions, a cultural initiative aimed at reviving and celebrating Turkey's dance traditions, presents two distinct performances weekly. The **Spirit of Anatolia** is an energized conglomeration of dances and rhythms, embellished with vibrantly colored costumes, representing regional traditions from all over the country. The show takes place every Tuesday and Friday at the **Firat Cultural Center (FKM),** Divanyolu/Yeniçeriler Caddesi (opposite the Column of Constantine). A separate **800 Years of Love** Sufi Ceremony of Whirling Dervishes showcases another uniquely Turkish art form every Saturday, Sunday, and Wednesday at the nearby **Press Museum.** Showtime is 7:30pm for both and tickets cost 35€. Yeniçeriler Cad. Darülsafaka Pasajı 74 (office) or Yeniçeriler Cad. 84 (Press Museum), Çemberlitaş. ✆ **0212/458-6215.** www.istanbuldanceensemble.com. Tram: Çemberlitaş.

Sound and Light Show The floodlit domes and minarets of the Blue Mosque are the backdrop to a nightly (in summer) sound-and-light spectacle at the entrance to the Blue Mosque in Sultanahmet Park. The show has a charming, spontaneous feel and accommodates visitors from round the globe by presenting shows on a schedule of rotating languages. For information, see the Tourist Information Office in Sultanahmet Park. Sultanahmet Meydanı. ✆ **0212/518-1802.** Free admission.

Al Jamal Al Jamal is all 1,001 Nights, an Arabian Peninsula fantasy draped in rich hues of indigo, purple, and gold. Together with the popular Turkish and Middle Eastern menu, Al Jamal combines excess and exoticism to create a very hot destination for the city's nightlife denizens. The tentlike structure features live performances, belly dancers, and drag queens. There's even a Turkish bath marble platform right in the middle of the tables. There's a prix-fixe menu for 165TL weekends, 145TL weekdays, and reservations are required. Al Jamal is open summer only, Monday to Saturday 8pm to 2am. Maçka Demokrasi Parki Içi/Democratic Park, Taskisla Cad. 3, Maçka. ✆ **0212/231-0356.** www.capamarka.com.tr.

TRADITIONAL ANATOLIAN AFTER-HOURS

Türku Evi Finds Backgammon, hookah pipes, and popular local singers performing the traditional yearning nomadic melodies fill these "Turkish Houses." This listing does not refer to just one spot but instead covers the numerous cozy bars populating Hasnun Galıp Street in Beyoğlu that feature live performers singing traditional Anatolian folk songs. This is really the experience you've come all this way for. Generally, basic dinner items are served. The small space fills up with locals, who, having eaten, get up and dance in the narrow aisle between the musicians and the kilim-covered tables and banquettes. Istiklal Cad., Hasnun Galıp Sok. (perpendicular to Büyükparmakkapı Sok.) 18A, Beyoğlu. Bus, metro, or Nostalgic Tramway to Taksim; tram/funicular via Kabataş to Taksim.

Zarifi ★★ Owned by descendants of Greek residents of Pera, Zarifi puts a new twist on the classic *meyhane* by infusing the melting pot of former Pera into the music and the menu. Did I say menu? You'll need to ask for it, as normally the food would just arrive.

 Here, you can choose from items on the Balkan, Pera, or Specials menu or opt for one of the two prix fixes. In the summer, Zarifi spreads her wings at the Supper Club at the New Yorker in Kuruçeşme. Compared to the *meyhanes* in the restaurant listings (p. 96), Zarifi has a bit more polish and popularity among Istanbul's yuppie crowd. Expect to drop around 80TL for the food and show. Reservations are required. Çukurlu Çeşme Sok. 13, Beyoğlu (from Istiklal Cad., turn onto Büyükparmakkapı Sok., then turn left onto Tel Sok. then right onto Çukulu Çeşme Sok.). ✆ **0212/293-5480.** www.zarifi.com.tr. Bus, metro, or Nostalgic Tramway to Taksim; tram/funicular via Kabataş to Taksim.

3 THE LOCAL BAR SCENE

The destinations listed below include restaurants, pubs, bars, and water-pipe cafes. None of these charge a cover; but depending on the type of place you choose, it's perfectly acceptable to linger over mezes and *rakı,* a cup of tea, or as long as it takes for the tobacco in the water pipe to burn down.

SULTANAHMET & EMINÖNÜ

Çorlulu Alipaşa Medrese Not far from the Grand Bazaar is the outdoor living-room-cum-tea-gardens hidden in the courtyard of the old Çorlulu Alipaşa Medrese. The tree-filled garden is a perfect way to unwind, with a glass of apple tea and the essence of strawberry in your water pipe, while you admire the display of carpets and souvenirs decorating the gardens of the bordering shops. The entrance to the tea gardens is on Yeniçeriler Caddesi near where the road changes names from Divanyolu Caddesi. Çorlulu Alipaşa Medrese, Çarşıkapı, Yeniçeriler Cad. No phone. Tram: Çemberlitaş.

Galata Bridge More central and ridiculously scenic is the cluster of bars, cafes, and fish restaurants newly occupying the upper and lower levels of the Galata Bridge. While there's nothing remarkable about the restaurants per se, a couple of the venues have leapfrogged over the dining experience straight to drinks and backgammon. The east-facing and always packed **Dersaadet Şark Kahvesi** (✆ **0212/292-7002**) is the hot ticket, as it faces the minarets of the Old City. Galata Bridge, btw. Eminönü and Karaköy. Bus or tram to Eminönü or Karaköy.

Meşale Çay Bahçesi Just at the entrance to the Arasta Bazaar is an outdoor collection of benches and tables perfectly placed for a balmy summer's eve or a midday tea break in the shadow of the Blue Mosque. In summer, a lone whirling derviş "performs" nightly at 8 and 10pm. Btw. Nakılbend and Turün soks., at the entrance to the Arasta Bazaar. ✆ **0212/518-9562.** Tram: Sultanahmet.

The North Shield The Sirkeci location of this popular pub franchise is a cozy, if not familiar, environment in which to slack off after a hard day of walking. There are a few banquettes, outdoor tables, a bar area, and a predictable menu of food and drink. Ebusuut Cad. 2 (opposite the Gülhane tram stop). ✆ **0212/527-0931.** www.thenorthshield.com. Tram: Gülhane.

Streets of Kumkapı The narrow warren of streets in the neighborhood opposite the fisherman's wharf of Kumkapı are crowded with restaurants that have staked their claim to individual patches of cobblestone. The atmosphere combines food and fun in a lively villagelike setting, where celebration and sometimes dancing accompany all the seafood you care to eat. Pick your poison (so to speak) by choosing a restaurant, and dig in. Caparız Sok., Kumkapı. Tram: Sultanahmet or bus 81 from Eminönü.

Yeni Marmara Finds Inconspicuously located on a little-trod street of Sultanahmet, this sleepy little teahouse and *nargile* (water-pipe) cafe is one of the neighborhood's best-kept secrets. Locals relax on the back terrace jutting out above the old city walls to enjoy a game of backgammon and views of the Marmara islands. Walls and floors are covered in old rugs, and the whole space has an appealing worn vibe. Open daily 9am to 1am. Küçük Ayasofya Cad., Çayıroğlu Sok. 46, Sultanahmet. ✆ **0212/516-9013.** No cover. Tram: Sultanahmet.

TAKSIM, TÜNEL & BEYOĞLU

Taksim is undeniably the heart of this city's commerce, while the entire district of Beyoğlu brings to mind characteristic back-street cafes, atmospheric bars, and stylish restaurants. While the tourists are shuttling between Taksim Square and Sultanahmet, the residents of Istanbul are making reservations in Beyoğlu. Twenty years ago this was not so, when Istiklal Caddesi looked more like the pre-Disney 42nd Street than the open-air shopping mall it is today. But tucked inside this neighborhood of opulent 19th-century mansions and former consulates are some of the classiest bars in town.

Beşinci Kat ★ Whimsical, even irreverent can best describe this funky, smoky, and lavender-filled duplex restaurant-cum-nightclub with open-air rooftop terrace. Offering a playlist that runs the gamut "from Abba to Zappa," Beşinci Kat (which literally means "Fifth Floor") bills itself as place for "anyone who's got style, taste, and a free mind." While not a gay bar, it's very gay friendly. Soğancı Sok. 7, 5th Floor, Cihangir. ✆ **0212/293-3774.** www.5kat.com. Bus, metro, or Nostalgic Tramway to Taksim; tram/funicular via Kabataş to Taksim.

Cezayir The most popular locale among the new restaurants and cafes around the restored buildings of Francız Sokağı occupies an early-20th-century schoolhouse. The large garden is shaded by enormous plane trees and the food is creative without veering too far off the Turkish culinary map. Choose from an a la carte menu (appetizers and main courses 10TL–35TL) or from a selection of prix-fixe menus, including a "cocktail menu" for those not in the mood for a full meal. Hayriye Cad. 12 (follow Yeni Çarşı Cad. from Galatasaray High School and turn left on Hayriye Cad.). ✆ **0212/245-9980.** Reservations suggested. Nostalgic Tramway to Galatasaray.

Enginar As with much of the history of Galata, no one knows for sure what the first building on this site was, but turn the clock back 100 years and envision this bar/bistro as an Italian bank, then later as a coffeehouse for the neighborhood Jewish community, and most recently as an Akbank. (Although the renovations introduced "new" stones, the foundations may date back 400 years.) With its attractive lighting and rustic warehouse-like interior space, Enginar is a comfortable and quiet place for a drink in a very cool neighborhood. Enginar hosts live music a few times a week. Şah Kapısı Sok. 4/A, Galata (straight down Istiklal Cad. to the Galata Tower; the cafe is on your right). ✆ **0212/293-9697.** Funicular to Upper or Lower Tünel, then walk.

James Joyce Irish Pub A cozy hangout for expatriate students and locals alike is the James Joyce Irish Pub. The space is open practically all day, but gains in popularity thanks to a pseudo-nightly lineup of live music. The owner occasionally raises his guitar and performs medleys of old English folk songs. When you get hungry, the kitchen serves classics like shepherd's pie, Irish stew, and fish and chips. Istiklal Caddesi, Balo Sok. 26, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/244-7970.** www.theirishcentre.com. Bus, metro, or Nostalgic Tramway to Taksim; tram/funicular via Kabataş to Taksim.

NuPera NuPera is actually the name of a renovated 19th-century building in the neighborhood of Pera, now an utterly reborn neighborhood chock-full of cafes and restaurants. The building contains an entertainment complex of sorts, with two restaurants, Moreish and NuPera, on the ground floor. The latter serves a bit of everything: tapas, homemade pastas, and Turkish comfort food, moving up to the rooftop for the cool summer breezes and sweeping views of a twinkling city and the Golden Horn as soon as weather permits. Moreish is new and still in the experimental stages, under the watchful hands of new chef and part-owner Esra Muslu. On the weekends, NuPera becomes a club, turning each separate space into a unique venue offering different types of music in each. Meşrutiyet Cad. 149, Tepebaşı. ✆ **0212/245-6070.** Funicular to Upper Tünel or bus to Tepebaşı.

Otto Istanbul Otto has rapidly made a name for itself with three locations, each offering a different slant on nightlife. Through the large street-side windows at the Otto Sofyalı bar, it's all see and be seen, where black-clad guests crowd the artsy environment for live music or just plain old bar-watching entertainment. Around the corner on Şehbender Sokak is Otto Tünel, a more local-friendly bar/eatery serving a relaxed menu of better-than-bar food accompanied by a long list of creative cocktails. On the campus of SantralIstanbul is Otto's sometime venue for music concerts and events. During the daytime, the outsized pavilion offers museumgoers a welcome respite from a thirsty afternoon of art. Otto Sofyalı, Asmalımescit Mah. Sofyalı Sok. 22A-22/1, Tünel. ✆ **212/252-6588.** Otto Tünel, Şehbender Sok. 5/1, Tünel. ✆ **0212/292-7015.** Otto Santral, SantralIstanbul, Eski Silahtarağa Elektrik Santrali, Kazım Karabekir Cad. 1, Eyüp. ✆ **0212/427-1889.** www.ottoistanbul.com. Funicular to Upper Tünel.

Parantez Bistro In the summertime, locals make a beeline to this tiny alley outpost to perch street-side and to sip Satsuma-ade (tastes like Mandarin orange) or one of the many popular mojito-style cocktails on offer, not least of all because the drinks are reasonably priced. The place is so popular that even in winter people happily huddle in the narrow street to nurse hot wine or chocolate. The sesame chicken or shrimp fritters are just a sampling of the nibbles available. At the adjacent **Parantez Deli** wine and cheese bar, you can nab one of the two bistro tables and down a bottle of wine or drink tea. Asmali Mescid Mah. Sofyalı-Jurnal Sok. 3, Tünel. ✆ **0212/245-6735.** www.parantezbistro.com. Funicular to Upper Tünel.

Şarabı This Istiklal wine bar looks like any other storefront cafe, but just a few steps down to the cellar—where those in the know head—is a late-19th-century underground aqueduct that is said to run from the British Embassy all the way to Tophane. The wine bar stocks more than 100 labels, including some of the better Turkish vintages. Try the Sarafin Cabernet, or the Karma Cabernet/Özküküzü blend. Istiklal Cad. 80b, Beyoğlu, next to the Çiçek Pasajı. ✆ **0212/244-4609.** Nostalgic Tramway to Galatasaray.

Taps When asked for insider information on where the locals go, it is a rare response that includes an American-style brewery. But therein lies the paradox: They're certainly not going to the Turkish Night show in the Galata Tower. Taps dispenses seven or eight home-brews, along with a menu typical of this format (finger foods, pizza, salads, wraps, and pasta). The original outlet is in Nişantaşı (Teşvikiye Cad., Atiye Sok. 5; ✆ **0212/296-2020**), but this is more central. Sofyalı Sok. 11, Asmalımescit, Tünel. ✆ **0212/245-7610.** www.tapsistanbul.com. Funicular to Upper Tünel.

360 Istanbul ★★ With views as good as this, it's no wonder that Istanbul is sprouting restaurant and bar venues in what are traditionally apartment or office buildings. 360 Istanbul takes advantage of the belfry of St. Antoine and panoramic views of the Golden Horn; on a cool summer's eve, there's really no better place to be. The decor is an unexpectedly pleasing amalgam of brick, steel, glass, and velvet; tables, alfresco banquettes, and a lounge area ensure that everybody gets something he or she wants. The Thai and Turkish menu is rather beside the point; although, there are plenty of appetizers and finger foods to hold you over for the real meal. Go early for the best outdoor seating, or arrive late and mill about the wraparound terrace. Reservations are suggested for dinner. Mısır Apartment Building, Istiklal Cad. 311, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/251-1042.** www.360istanbul.com. Nostalgic Tramway to Odakule.

Viktor Levi Şarap Evi A veritable institution in Beyoğlu, Viktor Levi is one of Istanbul's oldest wine houses. The *fer forgé* is the first indication of the 19th-century origins of the wine bar; it's a great spot to head to if you're looking to "go where the natives go" (if there is only one such place). Impress your date by ordering a bottle of the Viktor Levi special house wine. Hamalbaşi Cad. 12, Beyoğlu. ✆ **0212/249-6085.** Nostalgic Tramway to Galatasaray or bus to Tepebaşı.

ALONG THE BOSPHORUS

Istanbul's nightlife succumbs to the lure of the Bosphorus in the summer months (generally Apr until the end of Oct), moving alfresco and up to the seafront venues of Ortaköy and Kuruçeşme. Names tend to change seasonally, but the locations and general theme stays the same.

Anjelique ★★ This is a sister operation to the majorly successful Vogue, Anna, A'jia, and Da Mario (not all listed here). The formula seems unable to fail. Anjelique takes up the top three floors above Da Mario (creating a dining dilemma, p. 119). Jazz and soul are played during dining hours, complementing a sensual decor backlit by the nighttime glow of the sea and sky. Dinner is served on the top two floors, while the lower floor is dedicated to the dynamic lounge. Open May through October. Muallim Naci Cad., Salhane Sok. 10, Ortaköy. ✆ **0212/327-2844.** www.istanbuldoors.com. No cover. Bus to Ortaköy.

Blackk ★★ Short of being on (Suada) or next to (Reina) the water, the views from Blackk are hard to beat. Inside it's all damask walls, sultry lighting, and well, black everything. The clientele hovers a notch above upscale—expect to see international fashion designers and high-profile politicians. The venue has a restaurant (expect around 100TL per person for dinner) and a club, and there's live music on occasional nights. Muallim Naci Cad. 71, Ortaköy. ✆ **0212/236-7256.** www.blackk.net. No cover.

Reina ★ As the grande dame of after-hours entertainment, Reina is a veritable multiplex of popular restaurants magnificently placed waterside and lit by neon, candlelight, and the reflection off of the Bosphorus. There are a handful of waterfront dance floors, bars, and restaurants including the Zagat-rated Park Şamdan (reservations required for all restaurants). Its success has definitely gotten to its head, resulting in an exorbitant cover and downright arrogant doormen. Book a table at one of the restaurants and glide right in. Muallim Naci Cad. 44, Ortaköy. ✆ **0212/259-5919.** www.reina.com.tr. Fri–Sat cover 50TL. Bus to Ortaköy.

Suada ★★ It's a floating platform opposite the Bosphorus village of Kuruçeşme that, years ago, was privately owned by the football/soccer team Galatasaray. Suada is now a beach club by day, and overwrought Istanbullus descend upon it to laze about and swim

in the island's pool. The sound gets turned up at night, when the "island" nightclub gets cranking. There's a chic bar and two restaurants—Suada Club Kebap and Arşipel—surrounded by the thousands of twinkling lights from both the European and Asian shores of the Bosphorus. The food is top-notch, but seriously, who cares? There's a complementary boat shuttle from Kuruçeşme. Daytime entrance fee (for use of the Olympic-size pool) is 50TL weekdays, 70TL Saturday and Sunday. Galatasaray Asası, Kuruçeşme. ✆ **0212/263-7300.** www.suada.com.tr. Bus to Kuruçesme, then take the courtesy boat over.

Sunset Bar and Grill ★★★ A restaurant and bar overlook a particularly breathtaking stretch of the Bosphorus, sheltered by breezy stretches of sailcloth. When it opened in 1994, Sunset set a new standard for Istanbul nights, and as late as 2000, it was still the only game in town for sushi. The international menu takes advantage of the establishment's very own herb garden, and some would argue that Sunset still has the best sushi around. Take advantage of a rare vintage taken from probably the best wine cellar in Istanbul, or complement a glass of aged Bisquit cognac with a Cuban cigar. Open daily at noon until the last customer leaves. Adnan Saygun Cad., Yol Sok. 2, Ulus. ✆ **0212/287-0357.** www.sunsetgrillbar.com. Bus: U1 or 58ULl; taxi.

Ulus 29 ★★★ Istanbul's nightspots may come and go, but after 17 years, the popularity of this grand dame of a nightclub on the Bosphorus shows no signs of abating. An unbeatable location on the hilltop of Ulus, which translates into one of Istanbul's original unbeatable views of the Bosphorus, practically sealed its fate. One of the owners, Zeynep Fadıllıoğlu, who is an interior designer, likes to stay ahead of design trends and updates the decor annually. I can say, though, that each incarnation is even more plush, more rich, more lavish than the one before. The main event happens on the outdoor terrace—a collection of transparent netted tents enclose private dining or lounging areas. The international and Asian fusion menu gets mixed reviews, but gets an A+ for inventiveness. Kirechane Sok. 1, Adnan Saygün Cad. Ulus Parkı, Ulus. ✆ **0212/358-2929.** Bus: U1 or 58UL; taxi.

11 Side Trips from Istanbul

The emergence of domestic airline carriers puts Istanbul within an hour or two of almost everywhere in the country. This makes short hops both easy and cheap (cheaper than driving, with petrol prices at about 100TL per tank full, compared to fares as low as 59TL). For the purposes of this book, short hops here will include only those select popular or significant spots reachable by land or ferry in less than 2 hours. You'll be able to return to your Istanbul hotel in the evening with enough time for a big night out or a relaxing night in.

1 BURSA: GATEWAY TO AN EMPIRE

Bursa established itself as an important center as far back as pre-Roman times, attracting emperors and rulers for its rich, fertile soil and healing thermal waters. The arrival of the Ottomans in 1326 ensured the city's prosperity as a cultural and economic center that now represents one of the richest legacies of early Ottoman art and architecture. As the first capital of the Ottoman Empire, Bursa became the beneficiary of the finest mosques, theological schools *(medreses),* humanitarian centers *(imarets),* and social services (*hans, hamams,* and public fountains). The density of arched portals, undulating domes, artfully tiled minarets, and magnificently carved *minbars* (pulpits) could easily provide the coursework for extensive study of the Ottomans, and without a doubt, fill multiple daylong walking tours.

Today Bursa is a thriving cosmopolitan center with roots in industry and agriculture, renowned for its fine silk and cotton textiles, and the center of Turkey's automobile industry. The nearby ski resorts at Mount Uludağ provide city dwellers with an easy weekend getaway, while others just make a special trip here to stock up on cotton towels. Still, many flock here for the same reasons the Romans, Byzantines, and Ottomans did: the indulgence afforded by the density of rich, hot mineral springs bubbling up all over the region.

If you plan on just a quick architectural and historical pilgrimage, you could reasonably make Bursa a day trip from Istanbul. An overnight excursion is more realistic if you want to make it a short spa getaway and leave time to wander through the exquisite *hans* (privately owned inns or marketplaces) of the early Ottoman era.

A LOOK AT THE PAST

It was common practice for a conquering king to attach his name to the cities that he founded, so the consensus is that King Prusia of Bithynia established a kingdom on the remains of a preexisting civilization here. Prusia (say it 10 times fast and it starts to sound like Bursa) of Olympus, distinguishing it from King Prusia's other conquests, was later leagued with Rome, a colonization that is attributed to the time of Eumenes II, leader of Pergamum. Bursa thrived, thanks to Rome's influence and the introduction of Christianity by the apostle Andrew. In the 6th century A.D., Emperor Justinian constructed baths and a lavish palace in the area, taking full advantage of the region's economic and thermal

resources. From 1080 to 1326, Bursa bore the brunt of more than its fair share of invasions, with Selçuks, Turks, raiding Arabs, Byzantines, and Crusaders all trying to get a hold on this prosperous center. One of the Turkic tribes broke the chain when the Osmanlı tribe of Turks, led by Osman and later his son Orhan, entered Bursa in 1326 after a 10-year-long siege. Orhan established Bursa as the first permanent Ottoman capital, building a mosque and *medrese* on the site of a Byzantine monastery in what is now the Hisar District. The city expanded and thrived under sultans Murat I, Yıldırım Beyazıt, Mehmet I, and Murad II. Bursa's importance began to wane when the Ottoman capital was transferred to Adrianople (present-day Edirne).

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE

By Ferry From Istanbul's Yenikapı docks are two ferry options for excursions to Bursa. The first is IDO's twice-daily service to the Güzelyalı port (IDO calls this service the Yenikapı/Bursa service; ✆ **0212/444-4436;** www.ido.com.tr), currently departing at 7:30am and 5:30pm. The ferry takes 80 minutes and costs 20TL per person. From Güzelyalı to Bursa, take the local bus to the metro, which you will take to the last stop, arriving in the city center. Total time (including ferry, bus, and metro) from Istanbul to Bursa is about 2½ hours.

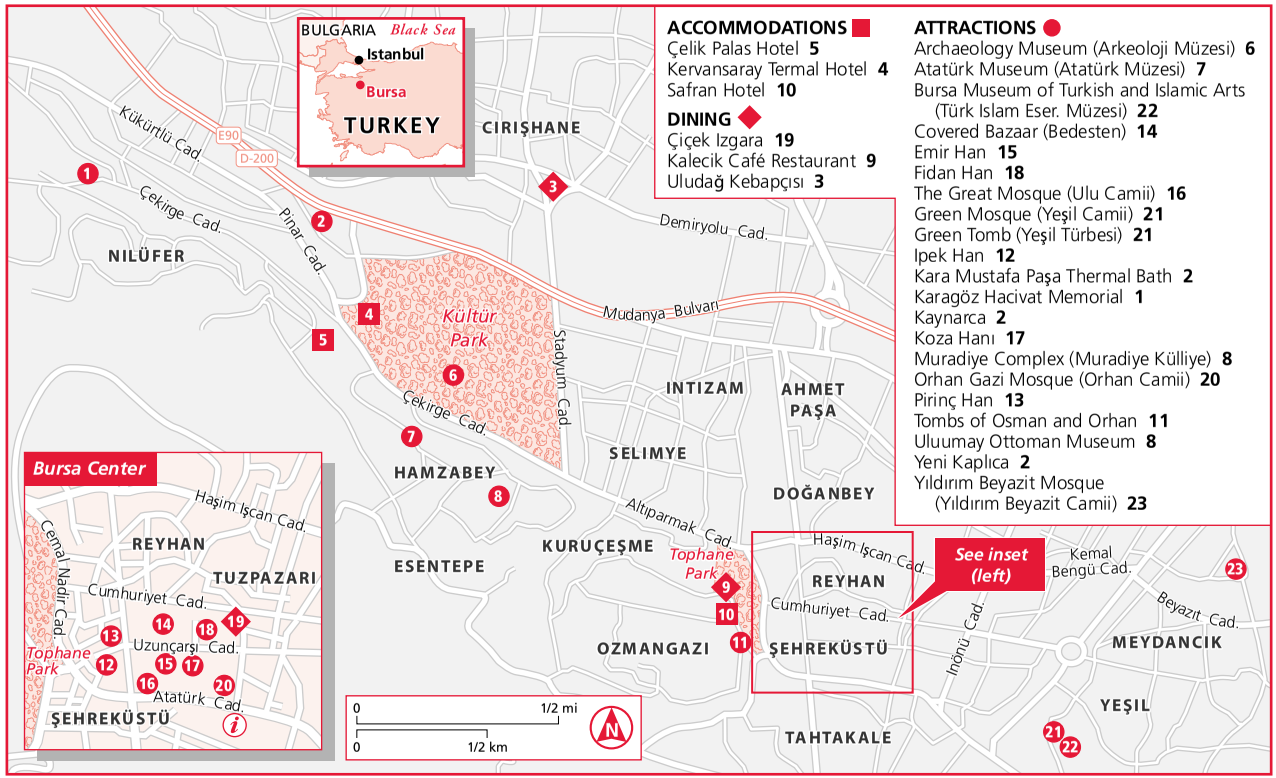
The other option is the 70-minute ferry ride (13TL passengers) to Yalova, north of Bursa. Ferries depart out of Istanbul's Yenikapı docks (the 7:30am boat leaves out of Kabataş; there is a free shuttle from Yenikapı for the early morning departure). From the Yalova ferry landing, hop on one of the many buses lined up outside the gates; the ride to Bursa's *otogar* (bus station) takes about 50 minutes and costs around 10TL. Bursa's *otogar* is located more than 10km (6 miles) out of town, so it will be necessary to either get on a municipal bus (no. 38 to Heykel or no. 96 to Çekirge) or take a taxi into town. The bus takes about half an hour and costs 1.50TL. With luggage, this is a major stretch. Instead, a taxi is direct, quick, and cheap (expect to pay around 20TL for the 20-min. ride).

Both the ferry to Yalova and to Güzelyalı accept cars, so if you're not overly excited about the hoops you have to jump through to get there, you can shuttle yourself from the ferry docks straight into Bursa. IDO charges 65TL and 80TL respectively for cars plus 15TL and 11TL for each *additional* passenger in the vehicle.

By Bus If you prefer to do the entire journey by land, **Nilüfer Turizm** (✆ **0224/444-0099**), based in Bursa, provides the most comprehensive bus service into Bursa. The 3½-hour trip from Istanbul costs 15TL. **Metro** (✆ **0212/444-3455**) runs buses almost hourly from Istanbul for the same price, as does **Kamil Koç** (✆ **0224/444-0562**). All intercity bus service heads directly to the *otogar,* about 20 minutes outside of town. If you're headed to Çekirge, hop on local bus no. 96; to get to the city center/Ulu Cami, take bus no. 38. ***Important:*** If Bursa is just one of many stops on your chosen bus company's itinerary, you may get left on the road rather than at the station proper. Confirm your drop-off point when purchasing your ticket to ensure you're transported into the Bursa *otogar,* not just *near* it.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The **Tourist Information office** (✆ **0224/251-1834;** fax 0224/220-1848) is hidden underneath Atatürk Caddesi in the center of town. If you're standing with Orhan Camii on your right and the Belediye (Municipal Building) on your left, the office is straight ahead of you at 12 o'clock. The PTT (post office) is located a few blocks west (to the right) down Atatürk Caddesi on the opposite side of the street.



ACCOMMODATIONS
Çelik Palas Hotel **5**
Kervansaray Termal Hotel **4**
Safran Hotel **10**

DINING
Çiçek Izgara **19**
Kalecik Café Restaurant **9**
Uludağ Kebapçısı **3**

ATTRACTIONS
Archaeology Museum (Arkeoloji Müzesi) **6**
Atatürk Museum (Atatürk Müzesi) **7**
Bursa Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts (Türk Islam Eser. Müzesi) **22**
Covered Bazaar (Bedesten) **14**
Emir Han **15**
Fidan Han **18**
The Great Mosque (Ulu Camii) **16**
Green Mosque (Yeşil Camii) **21**
Green Tomb (Yeşil Türbesi) **21**
Ipek Han **12**
Kara Mustafa Paşa Thermal Bath **2**
Karagöz Hacivat Memorial **1**
Kaynarca **2**
Koza Hanı **17**
Muradiye Complex (Muradiye Külliye) **8**
Orhan Gazi Mosque (Orhan Camii) **20**
Pirinç Han **13**
Tombs of Osman and Orhan **11**
Uluumay Ottoman Museum **8**
Yeni Kaplıca **2**
Yıldırım Beyazit Mosque (Yıldırım Beyazit Camii) **23**

Tips Turkish Towels & Such

If you're in the market for a few fluffy towels or one of those luscious Turkish bathrobes that sell for an arm and a leg in Bloomingdale's, the prices and selection at Bursa's **Covered Bazaar** (see "Exploring Bursa," below) can't be beat. The subtlest prints and plushest linens and towels are found at **Özdilek,** with branches in both the bazaar (exit the underground passage opposite the PTT and walk 1 block in) and a shopping center at Yenı Yalova Yolu 4, on the highway from the *otogar* (✆ **0224/219-6000**). Silk fabrics, such as scarves, blouses, and tablecloths, are available in shops on the upper level of **Koza Hanı,** the historic *bedesten* (covered market) next to Orhan Camii. For modern merchandise in a slick mall setting, the new glass pyramid–topped **Zafer Plaza** houses franchises such as Quicksilver, Vakko, Demirel, Mavi Jeans, and Polo Garage.

All of the major bus companies have ticket offices around Heykel; tickets can also be purchased through any local travel agent or at the *otogar.*

ORIENTATION The concentration of early Selçuk–inspired architecture is clustered in the commercial center of Bursa, in the area better known to the locals as **Heykel,** after the equestrian statue of Atatürk commanding the plaza just a few blocks to the east (*heykel* means "statue" in Turkish). Again, using the Tourist Information office for orientation, to the west/right is **Tophane Park** and the **Hisar District,** where the conquering Ottoman armies set up their capital in the 15th century. The road leads into the posher **Çekirge** section, where ambassadors and statesmen flock for the hotels and thermal hot springs. The winter ski resort of Uludağ is about 36km (22 miles) to the south of Bursa and reachable via a funicular from the center of town.

GETTING AROUND In all likelihood, you will spend most of your time between the Heykel and Çekirge neighborhoods. While covering small distances on foot in either neighborhood is possible, the two are just too far apart to think about walking between them. Instead, take advantage of the newish Bursaray, Bursa's two-line metro and growing. The most-helpful station stops are Şehreküstü and Kültürpark, although there will be a (long) couple of blocks walk to/from either stop. The fare for short distances is 1.10TL. A taxi taking the same route will cost under 15TL.

EXPLORING BURSA

Bursa is so jampacked with historic structures that it would be impossible to list them all here. In addition to the major sites named below, be sure to wander through the marketplace, spread out among open-air and covered streets. *Hans* are traditionally double-storied arcaded buildings with a central courtyard, usually occupied by an ornate fountain or pool or raised *mescit* (a small mosque). The *hans* are still used for trade and make lovely shaded retreats to take coffee outdoors and poke amid the local merchandise. The **Fidan Han** dates to the 15th century and has a central pool topped by a *mescit.* The **Pirinç Han** (closed) was constructed by Beyazıt II to earn the revenue necessary to cover the expenses of his mosque and soup kitchen in Istanbul. The **Ipek Han** is the largest *han* in Bursa and contains an octagonal *mescit* in the center of the courtyard. The revenue from this *han* was used to pay for the construction of the Yeşil Mosque. The courtyard of **Emir Han** has a graceful marble pool with exterior faucets to allow for ablutions.

Archaeology Museum (Arkeoloji Müzesi) Constructed with the charm of any 1972 institutional project, this museum is worth the 30 minutes it will take to get through, especially if you're strolling through Çekirge or into Kültür Park. The fact that the attendant trails you to turn the lights on and off is a bit unnerving (the museum doesn't see that many tourists), obliging you to react with an appropriate level of enthusiasm. The museum houses regional artifacts dating back to the 3rd century B.C., with crude pottery and tools from as far back as the Neolithic period. Particularly impressive is the collection of ceramic and glass objects from the Classical era, much of which has remained surprisingly intact. The extensive collection of coins displayed on the mezzanine is significant because notable figures had a habit of emblazoning their portraits on the face of the piece, providing a rare window of accessibility to the ancients. ***Note:*** The museum will be closed through 2010 for restoration.

Kültür Park. ✆ **0224/220-2029.** Admission 5TL. Tues–Sun 8:30am–noon and 1–5pm.

Atatürk Museum (Atatürk Müzesi) This is one of those traditional timber mansions at which you'd love to get a closer look. The historic rooms have been left as they were when Atatürk slept here on his visits to Bursa, down to the very last particle of dust.

Çekirge Cad., next to the Çelik Palas. ✆ **0224/236-4844.** Free admission. Tues–Sun 8:30am–noon and 1–5pm.

Bursa Museum of Turkish and Islamic A rts (Türk Islam Eser . Müz esi) ★ Housed in the former *medrese* of the Green Mosque, built in 1419 by Çelebi Sultan Mehmet along with the other buildings in the Yeşil complex, this museum is worth a look, particularly because they've gone to the trouble of providing English translations. The exhibits are intimately displayed in small rooms around a central courtyard. There's a space devoted to derviş cult objects, a *hamam* room displaying silver clogs and silk-embroidered bath accessories, and a model of a traditional Turkish coffeehouse, complete with barber's chair. The collection also includes Selçuk ceramics, inlaid wood pieces, and objects in iron, copper, bronze, and wood. A visit takes under 30 minutes.

Yeşil Cad., on the left just before the Green Mosque. ✆ **0224/327-7679.** Free admission. Tues–Sun 8:30am–5pm.

Covered Bazaar (Bedesten) The covered bazaar that stands on this site is a modern version of the original that was built by Yıldırım Beyazıt in the 14th century and leveled in the earthquake of 1855. There's no glitz—or tourists—here, evidenced by the distressing concentration of satin embroidered towels and bedspreads. Keep your eyes open for good-quality baby clothes and knockoff sportswear, and if you're looking to stuff a throw pillow, this is the place to do it, as stalls displaying fluffy unspun cotton of varying composition and quality abound.

Enter through Koza Hanı, or follow Çarşı Cad. from Ulu Camii. Daily 8:30am–7pm.

The Gr eat Mosque (Ulu C amii) ★★ When the building was erected in 1396, architects were just beginning to dabble in the problem of covering large spaces with small domes, and the result is the first example of a monumental Ottoman multidomed mosque. The 20 domes, supported on 12 stout pillars, are better admired from within, where the final result comes together in the mosque's five naves and four bays. Upon entering the mosque, eyes are naturally first drawn to the three-tiered **ablution fountain** beneath a large light well. Although this has its practical purposes, the result is an embracing sensation of serenity, and many worshipers remain on the raised platforms surrounding the fountain for long moments of meditation.

The date of completion (802H—H is for *hicret,* the day Mohammed left Mecca for Medina) is inscribed on the pulpit door, but several waves of renovations were necessary after the invasion of Tamerlane, with major restorations completed after the earthquake of 1855. Over the years, other, minor housekeeping projects were undertaken, including the application of a thick layer of synthetic varnish on the wooden *minbar* (pulpit) and on the *mahfel* (balcony used by the *muezzin*) that over the years became darkened by tar. Then in 1983, someone thought it would be a good idea to slap a layer of oil-based paint onto the mosque walls and all of the decorative carvings on the *minbar* and *mahfel.* Then a few years ago, a local expert in historic architectural ornamentation noticed some red specks peeking out from behind a carving, spurring a project completed in 2009 that has successfully restored the mosque's original decorative aspects.

The wooden *minbar* is a masterwork of carved geometric and floral reliefs, as are the banister work and other wood details. On the *mahfel,* a poem, along with rich ornamentation, can now be seen on the stairwell. Decorative etchings on leather were uncovered after the paint was removed from the side of the *mahfel,* leaving motifs of leaves, clouds, and flowers. To preserve these precious original ornaments, restorers applied a glassy layer to prevent any further "improvements."

Bursa center. Free admission. Daily dawn–dusk.

Green Mosque (Yeşil Camii) ★ Commanding a hillside terrace above the city, Yeşil Camii takes its name from the green and blue tiles in the interior. Intent on leaving his mark on Bursa, Mehmet I ordered the construction of this mosque, built entirely of hewn stone and marble, as a monument to the victorious ending of his 10-year struggle for the throne. Although an architect's inscription over the portal gives the completion date as 1419, the final decorations were ordered in 1424 on the orders of Murad II, and the two minarets were added in the 19th century.

One of the first mosques to employ an inverted T floor plan, the building signals the dawn of a new Turkish architectural tradition. The "Turkish pleat," an ingenious geometric corner detail allowing for the placement of a circular dome atop a square base, is a design device original to Turkey, while the use of multicolored ceramic tile, an influence that arrived with Tamerlane, is intricate enough to make your head spin. The high porcelain *mihrab* (a niche oriented toward Mecca) is a masterpiece of Ottoman ceramic art, difficult to miss at an understated 10m (33 ft.) high. In the center of the *mihrab* in Arabic script is the word "Allah," mounted on the wall at a later date.

The sumptuous gold mosaics and tile of the Imperial loge were probably an overstated attempt at one-upping the loggia that served the Byzantine emperors; it is flanked on either side by the servants' quarters and the harem, and a closer look is at the discretion of the caretaker.

East of Heykel at the end of Yeşil Cad. No phone. Free admission. Daily dawn–dusk.

Green Tomb (Yeşil Türbesi) ★★ This Selçuk-influenced tomb, representing one of the noblest of its era, has become the symbol of Bursa. If you're looking for a blue building, look no further, as the tiles of this hexagonal structure are actually turquoise, topped by a lead dome resting on a plaster rim. The construction of the tomb was ordered by the tenant himself, Sultan Mehmet I, and was completed around 1421. The color glazing of the interior tile work is an outstanding example of the art, from the window pediments adorned with verses of the Koran and *hadiths* (narrations of the life of Mohammad) in Arabic script, to the tile inscriptions on the sarcophagi. It's also worth

noting the workmanship of the colors of the panels on the *mihrab,* which change color according to your perspective.

East of Heykel at the end of Yeşil Cad. No phone. Free admission. Daily 8am–noon and 1–5pm.

Koza Hanı ★★ Meaning "Cocoon Inn," this caravansary was built in 1490 by Beyazıt II to raise funds for his mosque in Istanbul. Built on two levels, the inn provided a place for the merchants to trade the last of their goods, as this was the final stop on the Silk Road from China. In the middle of the courtyard is a small ***şadırvan*** (ablution fountain) for the small *mescit* (prayer room) poised above; in the summer the verdant space becomes a peaceful tea garden. The monumental portal decorated with turquoise tiles and carvings leads into the covered bazaar. Today the Koza Hanı continues its legacy of trading in silk with shops and boutiques stocked with scarves and fabrics at exorbitant (yet negotiable) prices.

Bursa Center. No phone. Free admission. Daily 8:30am–sunset.

Muradiye Complex (Muradiye Külliye) ★★ Constructed by Murad II between 1424 and 1426, this complex includes a mosque, a *medrese,* a soup kitchen, a bath, and a royal cemetery amid an overgrown garden of roses, magnolias, and cypress trees. Although the entrance to the grounds is open, many of the tombs and even the mosque are locked up, but the idle-yet-earnest ticket-window attendant will catch up with you for a private tour of the grounds, proudly locking and unlocking the royal tombs.

The Murad Paşa Mosque is a typical example of early Ottoman architecture, although the *mihrab* and *minbar* are 18th-century baroque. To the right, beginning toward the rear of the grounds, is no ordinary cemetery. The 12 stately tombs serve as the final resting places of not only some of the first sultans, but a sobering number of members of the royal family as well, including Hüma Hatun (mother of Mehmet the Conqueror), Şehzade Ahmed (son of Beyazıt II and crown prince), Sultan Murad II, Mustafa (son of Süleyman the Magnificent), and Gülşah Hatun (wife of Mehmet the Conqueror). Because succession rights relied not on heredity but on survival of the fittest, it was standard, even expected, practice for the victorious leader to cover his back by strangling his brothers with a wire cord.

The most recognizable casualty of this practice was the son of Süleyman the Magnificent: Şehzade (Prince) Mustafa, who as object of a plot spun by Roxelana for the succession of her own son, was unjustly murdered at the hands of his father. Ironically, the tomb was built by Selim II, Roxelana's son and successor to the throne.

The restored opulence of the tomb's outstanding porcelain tiling radiates hues of teal and red on quartz whose production technique was, until recently, lost. In contrast, the mausoleum of Murad I, son of Orhan and third Ottoman sultan, is elegant in its simplicity. The tomb has a domed central courtyard surrounded by the traditional ambulatory. Upon the request of the sultan, an oculus was designed in the dome to allow the rains to wash over the open tomb, symbolizing his sameness with the plain folk.

After reigning for just 18 days and living the rest of his life in exile, Cem Sultan, the youngest son of Mehmed II, was brought back to Bursa to receive a royal burial in the tomb that had actually been built for Şehzade Mustafa.

The 15th-century *medrese,* now operating as a clinic, was designed around a central courtyard accessible through vaulted arches at the entrance. No one will bother you if you want to take a quick peek, but the main use for this clinic is as a tuberculosis dispensary, so it might be better to do your admiring from the outside.

Fun Facts

They Died with a Smile (or, That Joke's a Killer)

When Sultan Orhan arrived in Bursa, he immediately set out to build his mosque. He appointed a man named **Hacivat** as supervisor, who in turn hired a local blacksmith named **Karagöz** to oversee the installation of the iron supports. Hacivat and Karagöz used to pass the time with clever quips and witty conversation that kept the laborers in stitches. The two eventually had the workmen doubled over in hysterics, to the point that work on the mosque came to a complete halt.

When the sultan found out about the construction delays, he had Hacivat and Karagöz hanged or decapitated (depending on which interpretation of the oral history you hear). The decapitated version is favored, because illustrators have had a grand time depicting the two hapless jokers approaching the sultan's throne to protest with their heads under their arms. Whichever demise you choose, the outcome is the same: Orhan finds someone to relate the dialogues, until the sultan, too, is keeling over with laughter. Realizing his error, the sultan orders a local leather worker to create lifelike figures of the two, so that they can continue their legacy of comedy. This puppetlike shadow play gained momentum and grew into a popular cultural tradition, boasting as many as 200 characters in one presentation.

As you drive from the center of town toward Çekirge, ask your driver to point out the **Karagöz Hacivat Memorial,** a small but colorful representation of the two folk heroes.

The Tarıhı II Murad Hamamı next to the mosque is still in operation, with separate days designated for men and women.

Çekirge (from the town center, take *dolmuş* marked MURADIYE). No phone. Free admission. Tues–Sun 8:30am–noon and 1–5pm.

Orhan Gazi Mosque (Orhan Camii) ★★ Constructed between 1339 and 1340 by Orhan Gazi, this is one of the most important early Ottoman constructions in Bursa. Pointed arches on the veranda show the beginnings of a particularly Ottoman detail, while the exterior brickwork recalls its Selçuk origins. The mosque was damaged in 1413 by Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey and repaired in 1417 by Çelebi Sultan Mehmet. Note the star-shaped decorations representing the course of the sun and the marble embellishments on the eastern and western facades.

The surrounding complex is one of the first in the Ottoman tradition, consisting of a mosque, *medrese,* soup kitchen, bath, and inn. The cats apparently stay there free of charge, and the whole courtyard and mosque interior have a homey feel.

Bursa town center, across from the Municipal Building. No phone. Free admission. Daily dawn–dusk.

Tombs of Osman and Orhan ★ This lovely park attracts local tourists as much for its tea gardens and stunning views as for the **tombs** of the two founders of the Ottoman Empire. The location in the *Hisar* (fortress), the oldest section of the city, which passed

from Roman to Byzantine and finally to Ottoman hands, is a fitting one for the final resting places of Osman Gazi and Orhan Gazi.

According to Osman Gazi's wish to be "laid to rest beneath the silver dome of Bursa," his tomb was constructed on the chapel of St. Elie, the Byzantine monastery formerly on the site. The sarcophagus, surrounded by an ornate brass balustrade, is decorated with mother-of-pearl inlay. At one time, the building also contained the tomb of Orhan, but after it was partially destroyed by fire and then leveled by the 1855 earthquake, Sultan Abdülaziz had Orhan's tomb rebuilt separately. The Orhan tomb, slightly less ornate than his father's tomb, was constructed on the foundation of an 11th-century Byzantine church, from which some mosaics in the floor have survived.

Hisar District (inside the entrance to Tophane Park along Arka Sok., just west of the post office). No phone. Free admission. Daily dawn–dusk.

Uluumay Ottoman Museum ★ The restored architectural gem that is the Sair Ahmet Medrese rivals the museum within. Located in the Muradiye Complex, this assemblage of folk art was collected from around the Ottoman Empire, including the Caucasus, the Balkans, and the home territory of Anatolia. The ample ethnographic exhibition features over 400 pieces of Ottoman-era jewelry, plus household items, saddlebags, silk scarves, and silver watch fobs, to name a few.

Şair Ahmet Paşa Medresesi, Muradiye Camisi Karşısı, Beşikçiler Cad., Muradiye. ✆ **0224/225-4813.** www.uluumay.com. Admission 5TL. Tues–Sun 9am–6:30pm (closed at 6pm, Sept–Apr).

Yıldırım Beyazıt Mosque (Yıldırım Beyazıt Camii) The two prominent domes, set one behind the other, represent an attempt at a design feature reminiscent of St. Irene of Constantinople and the St. John's Basilica at Ephesus. Awkwardly juxtaposed above the three remaining domes, the larger two create a prayer hall that was to become a theme in the architecture of Ottoman mosques.

The mosque forms a part of the *külliye,* or complex, comprising a *medrese,* a *hamam,* a hospital, and the tomb of the Sultan Beyazıt I, built by his son Süleyman the Magnificent in 1406.

Northeast of the town center in the Yıldırım District. No phone. Free admission. Daily dawn–dusk.

WHERE TO STAY

Çelik Palas Hotel Built in the 1930s under instructions by Atatürk, the Çelik Palas holds the title as Turkey's first five-star hotel. Until recently, this acclaimed Turkish icon was showing its dubious pedigree, but not even the upgrade a few years back put the hotel back at the top of the A-list. It's currently closed (projected reopening: mid-2010) as this storied hotel undergoes a major overhaul. Once complete, the Çelik Palas promises to be the destination hotel of Bursa; head straight to the domed **marble thermal pool,** the crown jewel of what will most likely be a deluxe wellness facility (see "Water, Water Everywhere: Turkey's Mineral Springs," below).

Çekirge Cad. 79, 16070 Çekirge. ✆ **0224/233-3800.** Fax 0224/236-1910. www.celikpalasotel.com. Call for rates.

Kervansaray Termal Hotel ★ This is the preferred hotel in Bursa, one that never lets you forget you're in a town of thermal springs. There's a decorative waterfall in the modern lobby, two swimming pools, and a renovated multidomed 700-year-old *hamam.* Rooms are drab but most have a balcony with a valley, mountain, or garden view; but, frankly, you've come for the thermal. The health club's cleverly designed swimming pool is divided by a retractable window, providing for both indoor and outdoor swimming,

Water, Water Everywhere: Turkey's Mineral Springs

A geologic oddity-cum-spa treat with which Turkey is uncommonly blessed is the mineral spring. Thermal baths flow freely throughout the countryside and, depending on the properties and temperature of the water, are reputed to address such varied ailments as obesity, digestive problems, rheumatism, and urological disorders. Soaking in the springs and covering yourself with mineral-rich mud are some of the country's lesser-known pleasures. You can experience the thermal springs enclosed in pamper-me surroundings or in humble, out-of-the-way sites.

In Bursa, history and pampering go hand in hand, and no historical pilgrimage to this city would be complete without a long soak in a mineral-rich thermal pool. The **Kervansaray Termal Hotel's 700-year-old thermal bath** ★★ (p. 245) takes advantage of the **Eski Kaplıca** thermal spring, an ancient source used as far back as Roman times. The bath was built in grand Ottoman style by Sultan Murat I in 1389, and a soak here (7am–11pm) is made all the more satisfying by its multiple domes and old stonemasonry. The price of admission to the thermal baths is 20TL for women and 24TL for men. Add 15TL each for massage and *kese*.

No one knows who originally occupied the **Yeni Kaplıca *hamam*** ★★, Kukurtlu Mah. Yeni Kaplıca Cad. 6 (✆ **0224/236-6968;** 11TL men's entrance,

and the water is supplied by nearby mineral springs. It's also got all the bells and whistles of a five-star property, including meeting and banquet facilities, a shopping arcade, and salon.

Çekirge Meydanı, 16080 Çekirge. ✆ **0224/233-9300.** Fax 0224/233-9324. www.kervansarayhotels.com. 211 units. 150€ double; 250€ and up suite. Rates lower June–Dec, higher for religious festivals. AE, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants; 2 bars; concierge; health club; outdoor pool; massage; room service; historic thermal bath w/separate sections for men and women. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

Safran Hotel The first guesthouse in Bursa, this hotel occupies a beautiful saffron-colored Ottoman mansion on a historic street across from Tophane Park. Rooms are characterized by old mattresses and worn flannel or print bedspreads, making the entire experience more like spending the weekend in a friend's garret. This of course assumes a minimum level of cleanliness, and the rattiness itself can be somewhat charming.

Ortapazar Cad., Arka Sok. 4, 16040 (near the gated entrance to the Osman and Orhan tombs). ✆ **224/224-7216.** Fax 224/224-7219. http://safranhotel.sitemynet.com. 10 units. 140TL double. AE, MC, V. Free parking. *In room:* A/C, cable TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi.

WHERE TO DINE

Çiçek Izgara TURKISH/KÖFTE There's nothing worse than wandering around the center of a busy town and not knowing where to eat. Çiçek Izgara comes highly recommended by the locals, combining three floors of white-linen tablecloths and impeccable

10TL women's entrance; 12TL sloughing, 15TL massage), built in 1555 and reconstructed for Süleyman the Magnificent by Grand Vizier Rüstem Paşa. The *hamam* (or at least the men's side) still displays its original opulence, allowing wide-eyed tourists to feel like Julius Caesar for a day.

Separated from the Yeni Kaplıca building by a tea garden is the less-impressive **Kaynarca,** Yeni Kaplıca Cad. 8 (✆ **0224/236-6955;** 10TL women's entrance, 11TL men's entrance; massage and *kese* are 15TL and 10TL, respectively), essentially a mud pit with locker rooms. They also offer an oil massage, 30 minutes of skin-hydrating, slippery bliss (25TL). **Kara Mustafa Pa a Thermal Bath,** Mudanya Cad. 10 (✆ **0224/236-6956**), was left over from the Byzantine era and was actually the first building on the site. There are two sections, including one where you can ooze yourself into a gravelike tile ditch full of scorching hot mud (avoid wearing a white bathing suit for this). There are also the regular bath facilities and cubicles for changing and resting. Kara Mustafa also has rudimentary hotel accommodations. Granted, it's all rather gritty, but thoroughly worth the experience. The more luxurious **Çelik Palas Hotel thermal pool** ★★ (p. 245) rests beneath a single multiple-sky-lit dome; the hotel's renovation will certainly add to its cachet.

service with the bright casualness of a cafeteria. Menu items include *peynerli köfte* (meatballs with cheese), *kabak dolması* (stuffed zucchini), and *cacık,* a refreshing yogurt soup.

Belediye Cad. (just after Orhan Camii on the left, 2nd floor). ✆ **0224/221-6526.** www.cicekizgara.com. Kebaps and *köfte* 8TL–13TL. MC, V. Daily 10am–midnight.

Kalecik Café Restaurant ★ TURKISH Typical Turkish fare (including a decadent serving of fried ice cream) is served in this diminutive, cozy, and perfectly, well, perfect historic Ottoman house. Outside in the garden are cloth-covered picnic tables and flowering vines enclosed by brick and ancient stone walls. The neighborhood hominess extends indoors to a narrow dining room lined with banquettes strewn with colorful pillows. A tiny room on the second floor is used as a coffee corner and has a lovely view of the street and old fortress.

Tophane Mah. Kale Sok. 22, Osmangazi. ✆ **0224/225-5473.** Appetizers and main courses 5TL–15TL. MC, V. Daily 9am–10pm.

Uludağ Kebapçısı ★★ KEBAPS The best food is often found in unremarkable, even divelike places. Although Grandpa Iskender, the inventor of the *döner kebap,* has the historical corner on this much-loved recipe, this place has perfected it. Branched out from two contiguous narrow storefronts near the old bus terminal to a second, more generously spaced restaurant in the Bursa City Area Shopping Center, the Uludağ Kebapçısı is arguably the best place in the world to eat the Iskender *döner kebap*. You can order it with decadent slices of steak *(bonfile),* surprisingly delicious kidney *(böbrek),* or

what the owner called "back" *(kantıfile)*—but don't complain to me if your cholesterol levels shoot through the roof: Uludağ goes through 18 kilograms (40 lb.) of butter per day.

Garaj Karşısı Şirin Sok. 12 (at the former bus terminal). ✆ **0224/251-4551** and in the Bursa City Area Shopping Center ✆ **0224/255-5556.** www.uludagkebapcisi.biz. Kebaps 15TL–20TL. MC, V. Daily 11am–6pm (the shopping center location is open until 10pm).

2 IZNIK & NICAEA: A PILGRIMAGE & SOME PLATES

To Turks, the sleepy lakeside resort of Iznik provides a respite from the sweltering summer sun; to Christendom, Iznik sits atop modern-day Nicaea, the seat of the Eastern Roman Empire during its period of exile following its ouster by the Crusaders, site of the 1st and 2nd Councils of Nicaea, and location of the 1st and 7th Ecumenical Councils. It's also synonymous with Ottoman ceramic art, which reached its pinnacle in the 15th and 16th centuries during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent. While you're here, you should take the time to have lunch at one of the lakeside restaurants.

GETTING THERE & GETTING AROUND

Iznik is easily reached from Bursa or via the ferries from Istanbul to Bursa (see "Getting There," p. 250). *Dolmuş* marked "Iznik" regularly depart from Yalova, north of Bursa, from the main road that passes in front of the ferryboat landing (cross the street and hop on one headed south) as well as from Bursa itself. Once in Iznik, buses deposit passengers on the main road in front of the church. Drivers should take the car ferry from Istanbul to Yalova. From Yalova, follow the road to Bursa, taking the first turnoff at Orhangazi to Iznik, and follow the road along the north side of the lake.

Iznik retains the grid plan established in its Hellenistic era. Monuments are well signposted, but without a car, you'll be pounding the pavement for the better part of a day.

EXPLORING IZNIK

Ancient Nicaea The ancient city of Nicaea and modern-day Iznik are enclosed along the eastern edge of Lake Iznik by about 5km (3 miles) of **ancient city walls** ★, made accessible through several ancient gates of which the **Istanbul Kapısı** ★ is the best preserved. In the center of town are the well-preserved remains of the **Church of Aya Sofya** ★★ (admission 3TL), a roofless 11th-century church that served as the Patriarchate during the period of Byzantine exile following the fourth Crusade. The church preserves parts of the mosaic flooring and a partially exposed fresco of the Pantocrator in the niche of the left aisle. Excavations conducted in 1935, however, revealed traces of an older structure dating to the 6th century A.D. and attributed to Justinian.

Near the southwest corner of the church (across the street) are partially uncovered outdoor tile-production workshops from as early as the 15th century. Many of the **brick and mud kilns** are still intact.

The **Yeşil Camii** dates to the late 14th century and displays a minaret covered with tiles in a colorful zigzag pattern. Unfortunately, these are not originals, as the actual tiles were destroyed. Across the street is the **Nilüfer Hatun Imareti,** built by Murat I and named after his mother, wife of Orhan Gazi and a Greek princess in her own right. Originally used as a charitable foundation and soup kitchen, the well-restored *imaret*

(soup kitchen) now contains the **Iznik Museum** (admission 3TL), harboring a small collection of Roman and Byzantine artifacts and remnants from nearby burial mounds. There's also a small collection of Iznik tiles, as well as several ethnological items.

Thirty years of excavations have barely made a dent in the uncovering of the **Roman Theatre,** built by Pliny the Younger between A.D. 111 and A.D. 113 during his time as governor of Bythinia. Rather than build the theater into the side of a hill, the theater was constructed using vaults.

Tourist Information Office: Atatürk Cad. (next to the Ayasofya), Iznik, Bursa. Iznik. ✆ **0224/757-1933**.

The Iznik Foundation Tiles, richly decorated with floral designs and colors recalling precious gems, served as architectural decoration in the palace, mosques, tombs, and other buildings with a predominantly religious function. (The sultan was also the caliph, extending religious function to the palace.) For this reason, Iznik ceramics represent one of the most important examples of Islamic art. Sadly, with the decline of the economic and political power of the Ottoman Empire, artisans and ateliers became less and less in demand, and ultimately the techniques used to make the ceramics were lost.

Thanks to the Iznik Foundation, this great artistic tradition is enjoying a steady revival. The foundation, which consists of an educational facility, a research laboratory, and a commercial center, has invested an enormous amount of energy in researching the technologies necessary for achieving success in each complex step of production. One of the first challenges is the acquisition of the raw materials, as authentic Iznik pieces contain a high ratio of quartz, a semiprecious stone. The remaining obstacles are technical, involving the proper ratio of quartz, the chemical composition of each pigment, and the correct application of heat (each pigment must be fired at a different temperature). Ottoman artisans labored their entire lives to perfect just one aspect of the product, with one person expert in the creation of coral red, another in cobalt blue, and yet another in maintaining accurate and consistent heat to a wood-fired kiln made of brick. The foundation's finished products are faithful copies of the originals that sell at prices competitive with the inferior products sold in Avanos, a town in the interior of Anatolia. The price of a plate or tile at the foundation can reach the stratosphere, but remember, these are made of quartz, while the fakes are made of clay. The foundation office is open to visitors and is also equipped with nine guest accommodations for those wishing to stay overnight. They also have a main office in Istanbul at Öksüz Çocuk Sok. 7, Kuruçeşme/Beşiktaş (✆ **0212/287-3243**).

Sahil Yolu Vakıf Sok. 13, Iznik. ✆ **0224/757-6025.** Fax 0224/757-5737. www.iznik.com. Free admission.

3 THE PRINCES' ISLANDS

The Princes' Islands are a slice of seaside heaven far from the chaos and scorching sun of the city, yet only a hop, skip, and a jump from Istanbul. For some reason, ancients and Ottomans banished their prisoners to the most idyllic spots; the islands were originally used as a place of exile for members of the royalty and clergy during the age of Byzantium. They were later taken over by the more clever residents of the city as summer homes. The atmosphere is one of pure repose thanks to the prohibition against vehicles; the only form of transportation on Büyükada (besides your own steam) is the characteristic and enchanting horse-drawn phaeton. In summer, the islands' populations swell with weekenders eager to stake out a lounge chair on one of the islands' many marvelous

beaches. And thanks to the introduction of sea buses that shorten the ferry trip by an hour, the islands are only a half-hour away, making them an accessible retreat from city life.

GETTING THERE Ferries depart for the islands from the Kabataş docks adjacent to Dolmabahçe Palace and from Bostancı on the Asian side. Conventional ferries from Kabataş make stops at Kadıköy on the Asian side before puddle-jumping the islands of Kınalıada, Burgazada, Heybeliada, and finally Büyükada. The ride all the way to Büyükada takes about 90 minutes and costs 3TL each way (2.50TL with the Akbil). The faster catamaran shortens the trip from Kabataş to Büyükada to about 50 minutes (one departure in winter and two in spring and summer). The trip costs a mere 7TL (5.50TL with the Akbil) each way, a pittance considering that seats are reserved compared to the body shuffle inevitable on the more crowded slow boat. Be sure to confirm all departure times in advance, as schedules may change (✆ **0212/444-4436;** www.ido.com.tr).

EXPLORING THE PRINCES' ISLANDS Thanks to the absence of motorized vehicles, the islands have managed to retain their old-world charm. Horse-drawn carriages serve as local taxis, and bicycles share the meandering roads with domestic donkeys. As expected, Istanbullus inundate the islands in the summer, looking to enjoy the characteristic architecture of the many Victorian-style clapboard mansions along with a relaxing day at the beach.

Big Island, or Büyükada, is the largest of the five islands and the one most inundated during high season. There are several good beaches, diving facilities, pine forests, churches dating from the 16th through the 19th centuries, lovely neoclassical seaside residences, and the old orphanage, originally built in 1898 as a hotel. The crown of the island is the hilltop monastery of Ayayorgı (St. George), a 202m (663-ft.) elevation from which you can almost see all the way back to Istanbul. To get to the monastery, take a carriage to Luna Park and take the 30-minute uphill path to Ayayorgı Peak (via donkey from the bustle of the open square at the base of the hill, if you wish; about 15TL), where you can sip their homemade wine while enjoying the panorama at the monastery's simple restaurant on the hill. One of the highlights of any visit to Büyükada is to tour the island from the back of a phaeton, serenaded by the clip-clopping of your horse on the cobbled streets. To better appreciate what the islands have to offer, organize your excursion for a weekday, when the ferries are not packed like sardine cans and you can still get a glimpse of the sand beneath the blankets of the other sun worshipers. In the fall, a stroll along the deserted cobblestone lanes met by the occasional donkey cart or a friendly pack of hopeful stray dogs transports you countless years back in time.

Fun Facts **Trotsky at the Beach**

Leon Trotsky spent the first years of his exile from the Soviet Union at the Arap Izzet Paşa Mansion in the Nizam District, Büyükada, from 1929 to 1933.

Kınalıada was the site of a major human-rights infraction—the Byzantines gouged out the eyes of and exiled Romanos Diogenes IV here for his defeat by the Selçuks in the Battle of Manzikert. The monastery built for the unfortunate general is still standing. The island was raided many times by pirates and later inhabited mainly by Armenians, but because of a harsh climate, it has attracted fewer people than the other islands. Electricity first came to the island in 1946, and it wasn't until the 1980s that the island

received a water supply from the municipality. Kınalıada is also the only one of the Princes' Islands without the services of the 19th-century phaetons.

Burgazada is the second of the Princes' Islands, originally settled as a Greek fishing village. In the 1950s the island attracted the wealthy Jews of Istanbul, who restored existing mansions or built their own. The island is also the home of a famous Turkish writer, Sait Faik, whose home has been turned into a museum. Two swim clubs are near the ferry landing, but if it's beaches you're after, you'll be better off on one of the other islands.

Heybeliada is the island closest to Büyükada and similar in character in that the natural beauty attracts boatloads of weekenders in the summer. The waterside promenade ensures a steady stream of visitors looking to avoid the crowds over on Büyükada, but aside from a few eateries, you'll have to make this a day trip or book a room on Büyükada anyway.

WHERE TO STAY Fantasy becomes reality on Büyükada, the biggest of the islands but not so built-up that you want to avoid it. That's why the listings here are all on the "Big Island." The **Splendid Palace Hotel,** 23 Nisan Cad. (turn right at the Büyükada Princess Hotel and drop your jaw at the white, domed mansion on your left; ✆ **0216/382-6950;** fax 0216/382-6775; www.splendidhotel.net; 75€–95€ double), is a palatial clapboard house with views of the Marmara with peaceful gardens, a private swimming pool, two restaurants, and an on-site patisserie. It's closed November through March. The newly renovated (2007) **Büyükada Princess Hotel,** Iskele Meydanı 2 (straight up the street from the ferry landing on the right; ✆ **0216/382-1628;** fax 0216/382-1949; www.buyukadaprincess.com; 110€ double), is a more modest but gracious seaside lodge and is open year-round. The small pool overlooking the Marmara Sea is open in the summer months. If you want to go all out for waterfront romance, head to the **Aya Nikola Boutique Pension,** Yilmaz Türk Cad. 104, Aya Nikola Mevkii (✆ **0212/382-4143;** www.ayanikolabutikpansiyon.com; 350TL room with fireplace; 300TL without).

WHERE TO DINE Restaurants specializing in fish line the Büyükada wharf to the left of the ferry landing, for breezy and atmospheric waterside dining. **Kalamar Restaurant,** Gülistan Cad. 10 (✆ **0216/382-1245**), is one of the first waterside restaurants that you encounter as you make your way down the wharf. **Milano Restaurant,** Gülistan Cad. 8 (✆ **0216/382-6352**), just a few doors down, has been here for more than 35 years and is the most famous restaurant on the island. More reasonable meals (minus the view) can be had in the main square at **Yıldızlar Caféteria,** Iskele Cad. 2 (✆ **0216/382-4360**), actually a 100-year-old cafeteria and tea garden serving *döner kebaps,* grilled cheese sandwiches, and the Turkish fast-food favorite, *lahmacun.*

4 POLONEZKÖY

Little more than an intersection in the road, the village itself has been designated as a national park. The bucolic setting, home to several restored Polish houses set on exquisite expanses of rolling hills, makes this a fashionable weekend getaway for residents of Istanbul or foreigners with a bit of spare time.

The origins of Polonezköy go back to the mid–19th century, when the Polish exile Adam Czartoriski lobbied Sultan Abdülmecid for the creation of a colony for Polish refugees, many of whom were fleeing from the invading Russians. The sultan granted these exiles permission to build a village in a forested area on the outskirts of Istanbul.

The original settlement—called Adampol after Czartoriski—had only 12 residents. Today, the settlement remains ethnically Polish.

The distinctive character of the town has attracted some foreigners with impressive credentials: Franz Liszt, Gustave Flaubert, and Lech Walesa all slept here, and even Pope John Paul II stopped in for a visit in 1994.

GETTING THERE Getting to Polonezköy is pretty much impossible unless you have a car. To get there from the European side, drive across the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge north of the city and follow the highway to the Beykoz/Kavaçık exit. Follow the road through Açarlar, after which it's about another 15 minutes through Turkish suburbia and the winding village road into Polonezköy. (The total time from Taksim is about 30 min.)

EXPLORING POLONEZKÖY This forested retreat is a perfect place to spend a weekend outdoors or an afternoon by the fire. In summertime, a festive weekend produce market draws locals in traditional Polish dress, and plenty of onlookers. A nature lover's path runs from near the Adampol Hotel through the woods, and most of the hotels have bikes for their guests. Best of all is the possibility to wander around town and negotiate the hire of a pony for an enjoyable, if not authentic, pastoral experience.

WHERE TO STAY The recently restored **Polka Country Hotel,** Cumhuriyet Yolu 20 (✆ **0216/432-3220;** www.polkahotel.com), is rustic and romantic. A garden swimming pool enjoys pastoral hillside views, while in cooler weather stone fireplaces in several buildings encourage guests to rekindle the romance. A dry sauna is also tempting after a windy afternoon along the forest trails. The hotel is owned and operated by Hakan Ozan, an architect whose vision for the building is simple and tasteful. All rooms have telephones and TV, but try to nab one of the two top "penthouse" rooms, made slightly more rustic thanks to slanted roofs. (These also have air-conditioning.) Rooms are 125TL on weekdays, 175TL on weekends (breakfast not included; 25TL).

WHERE TO DINE Continuing the village tradition, **Leonardo Restaurant,** Köyiçi Sok. 32, Beykoz (✆ **0216/432-3082;** www.leonardorestaurant.com), is the only restaurant in town to serve Polish food. It's also one of the few places you can get pork or even wild boar, but they also serve steaks, grills, and schnitzel at prices that hover around 30TL per dish. The Sunday buffet lunch is a hugely popular event for weekend getaways and costs around 60TL per person with drinks. The restaurant is in the restored home of one of the first Polish immigrants and has a splendid outdoor garden for Indian-summer evenings. Bring a bathing suit and towel in summer, because Leonardo has a pool in the garden.

12 Fast Facts

1 FAST FACTS: ISTANBUL

AREA CODES The three-digit area code for the European side of Istanbul is **212;** for the Asian side, dial **216.**

BUSINESS HOURS Banks are open Monday through Friday from 8:30am to noon and 1:30 to 5pm. Government offices are open Monday through Friday 8:30am to 12:30pm and 1:30 to 5:30pm. Official hours of operation for shops are Monday through Saturday 9:30am to 1pm and 2 to 7pm, but I've yet to find a store closed at lunchtime, or a shop outside of the Grand Bazaar or the Egyptian Spice Market closed on Sundays. Museums and palaces are generally open Tuesday through Sunday from 9:30am to 5 or 5:30pm, while the closing day for palaces is Tuesday, Thursday, or both. Museum opening hours are generally extended by an hour or two in summer; note that museums generally also stop selling tickets up to an hour prior to the official closing time.

CONSULATES & EMBASSIES **Australia,** Ritz Carlton Residences, Askerocağı Cad. 15, Elmadağ Şişli (✆ 0212/243-1333; Mon–Fri 8:30–4:45); **Canada,** Istiklal Cad. 189/5, Beyoğlu (✆ 0212/251-9838; Mon–Fri 9:30am–12:30pm and Mon–Thurs 1:30–5:30pm); **United Kingdom,** Meşrutiyet Cad. 34, Tepebaşı (✆ 0212/334-6400; consular section Mon–Fri 9am–12:30pm and 2–3:30pm); **United States,** Istinye Mah., Kaplıcalar Mevkii Sok. 2, Istinye (✆ 0212/335-9000; Mon–Fri 8am–4:30pm).

COURIER SERVICES The post office (PTT) offers an express mail service *(acele posta servisi),* although you may feel safer with old reliables such as DHL (✆ **0212/444-0040**), FedEx (✆ **0212/444-0606**), TNT (✆ **0212/444-0868**), or UPS (✆ **0212/444-0033**).

DENTIST Istanbul seems to have developed its own dental tourism niche. The **Koç American Hospital** in Nişantaşı (✆ **0212/311-2000**) and the **International Hospital** in Yeşilyurt (✆ **0212/663-3000**) can provide emergency dental services in an English-speaking atmosphere. For a list of private practitioners, log onto http://turkey.usembassy.gov/docistanbul.html.

DRINKING LAWS For a predominantly Muslim country, it might be surprising that alcohol is even sold in Turkey. The truth is, beer, wine, and the national drink *rakı* have quite a loyal following here. Alcohol is available for purchase in restaurants, in bars, in grocery aisles, and at convenience stores. In recent years, however, the current, Islamic-leaning government has done its part by setting sky-high taxes on alcohol, and restaurants operated by the municipality run a dry operation. Theoretically you have to be at least 18 to purchase or consume it.

DRUGSTORES & PHARMACIES Pharmacists in Turkey are qualified to provide some medical services beyond filling prescriptions, such as administering injections, bandaging minor injuries, and suggesting medication. Local pharmacies

(*eczane)* operate on a rotating schedule so that one is always open; each posts the address of the one whose turn it is in the window (*Nöbetçi* or "on night duty").

ELECTRICITY The standard is 220 volts, and outlets are compatible with the round European two-prong plug. You may be able to leave your hair dryer at home, as most hotel rooms come equipped with at least a weak one. Visitors from America and Canada with electronics that need to be recharged will need an adapter, a transformer, or both, depending on the appliance.

EMERGENCIES Local emergency numbers are fire ✆ **110,** police ✆ **155,** and ambulance ✆ **112.** Emergencies may also warrant a call to **Medline** (✆ **0212/444-1212,** 24 hr. a day), a private company equipped to deal with any medical crisis, including ambulance transfers (cost varies according to distance), lab tests, and home treatment. The **International Hospital** (see "Hospitals," below) also provides ambulance services.

GASOLINE (PETROL) The cost of petrol in Turkey is among the highest in Europe. Taxes are already included in the printed price. One U.S. gallon equals 3.8 liters or .85 imperial gallons.

HOLIDAYS Most shops and official offices and museums are closed on January 1, April 23 (National Independence & Children's Day), May 19 (Youth & Sports Day), August 30 (Victory Day), and October 28–29 (Republic Day). These same establishments also generally close on the first day of religious holidays. During the 30 days of Ramadan, many shops and businesses close early, while many restaurants either close down completely or offer limited menus at lunchtime.

HOSPITALS For optimal local emergency care, put yourself in the hands of one of the reputed *private* hospital facilities with reliable English-speaking staff: the new **Koç American Hospital,** Güzelbahçe Sok., Nişantaşı (✆ **0212/311-2000**); **Metropolitan Florence Nightingale Hospital,** Cemil Aslangüder Sok. 8, Gayrettepe (✆ **0212/288-3400**); the **International Hospital,** Istanbul Cad. 82, Yeşılköy (✆ **0212/663-3000**); the **German Hospital,** Sıraselviler Cad. 119, Taksim (✆ **0212/293-2150**); and the **Or-Ahayim Balat Hastanesi** (or Balat Jewish Hospital), Demirhisar Cad. 46–48 Ayvansaray (✆ **0212/491-0000**), with an on-staff international patient coordinator. Don't forget that payment is required at the time of treatment.

INSURANCE For information on traveler insurance, trip-cancellation insurance, and medical insurance while traveling, visit www.frommers.com/planning.

LANGUAGE English, French, and German are widespread, and increasingly so are Russian, Japanese, and even Korean. For the linguistically challenged, it may not be so unusual to encounter some minor language barrier (including, surprisingly enough, in established restaurants), but the inherent willingness of the Turks to help combined with a little sign language and a lot of laughs will almost always do the trick. See chapter 13 for a glossary of useful Turkish words and phrases.

LAUNDROMATS The Turkish word for a laundromat is *çamaşırhane.* You can drop your soiled clothing at **Popup Internet and Laundry,** Evkaf Sok., Yapı Hanı 5/2, Divanyolu (✆ **0212/458-1997;** Mon–Sat 10am–8pm). On the other side of the Golden Horn, a couple of laundry/dry cleaners are near the Pera Palace Hotel, and there's one tucked behind the *dolmuş* stand at the end of Ana Çeşmesi Sok. (intersection of Taksim Cad.), but the prices don't warrant circumventing the hotel service.

LEGAL AID Foreigners and tourists get the benefit of the doubt in most every run-in with the law, but some things you just

can't talk your way out of. For real trouble, contact your embassy or consulate for assistance and ask for their list of private law firms catering to English-speaking foreigners.

MAIL The PTT, hard to miss with its black and yellow signs, offers the usual postal services, in addition to selling tokens *(jeton)* and phone cards for the phone booths located in and around the post office and in most public places. Postcards cost 65kr to Europe and 80kr to all other continents. Rates for an international express mail letter begin at 22TL and go up to 40TL for deliveries farther afield. The PTT also has currency exchange and traveler's check services. Delivery, however, is notoriously slow, so I'd stick with one of the private carriers like UPS or DHL (see "Courier Services," above).

NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES For local and national information, the ***Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review*** (formerly the *Turkish Daily News*) gives a basic rundown of the day's headlines in print and online (www.hurriyet.com.tr) in English. The national ***Today's Zaman*** (www.zaman.com) also has a bilingual website. For local listings, the *Guide Istanbul* and *Time Out Istanbul* contain essential listings for tourists. Both are available at newsstands; the former is provided free at some hotels.

PASSPORTS See www.frommers.com/planning for information on how to obtain a passport.

POLICE To reach the police, dial **✆ 155.**

SMOKING It's official: Smoking is banned in all public places. So what does this mean for the local saying: "Eat like a Turk, smoke like a Turk"? It roughly translates to "we don't like this new law and we're not going to take it anymore." For the most part, though, people comply, and eating, drinking, and waiting around the airport is so much more pleasant these days.

TAXES A flat 18% VAT (value-added tax) is incorporated into the price of almost everything you buy. This number is reduced to 8% for tourist services such as hotel tax when not already included in the room rate. A special class of items that includes cars and luxury goods is taxed at a higher rate. And illustrating how the current government frowns on un-Islamic vices such as consuming alcohol, taxes for beer, wine, *rakı,* and spirits are as high as 40TL a liter.

TIME All of Turkey adheres to **Eastern European Time** (EET), which is Greenwich Mean Time +2. For North Americans: When it is noon in New York, it is 7pm in Istanbul. Daylight saving time, when clocks are set 1 hour ahead of standard time, is in effect as **Eastern European Summer Time** (EEST), from 1am on the second Sunday in March to 1am on the first Sunday in November.

TIPPING Gratuities are a way of life in Turkey and are often expected for even the most minor service. Try to keep coins or small notes handy and follow these guidelines: Give the **bellhop** 50kr to 1TL per bag; leave at least an additional 10% to 15% of the restaurant bill for your **waiter;** reward your **tour guide** with 10€ to 20€ for a job well done; and give the **attendant** in the Turkish bath 5TL *before* the rubdown. Shows of appreciation are also expected from your **chambermaid,** your **barber or hairdresser,** and an **usher** who has shown you to your seat. It is not customary in Turkey to tip the taxi driver.

TOILETS There are two types of waste repositories in Turkey: the traditional "European" toilet and the Turkish toilet—that dreaded porcelain latrine in the floor. Public restrooms (WC, or *tuvalet*) are located all around town, in addition to those in public buildings such as museums. "Toll money" in Istanbul costs about

25kr, which occasionally includes a bonus handful of toilet paper. Most modern hotels and restaurants in Istanbul have European toilets, while older establishments (including eateries, shops, and such), have albeit clean squat latrines. Many Turks and Europeans swear the Turkish toilet is hygienically superior; but having stepped in more unidentifiable liquids than I care to remember, I'm not convinced. In any case, you'll be thankful for those footrests and might even master the art of avoiding backsplash. The floor-level faucet and bucket are also for quick wash-ups (probably the reason the floor is wet); in both cases, toilet paper is for drying. Flushing the toilet paper is sometimes hazardous to the life of the plumbing, but generally when this is the case, there will be a sign above the tank requesting that you dispose of it in the nearby wastebasket. My advice? Lift your skirts high, hang on to the cuffs of your pants, and *always* carry tissues. As for the European toilets, most have built-in bidets. Simply locate the faucet—usually on the wall behind you to the right of the tank.

VISITOR INFORMA TION Your first stop for visitor information on Turkey should be the official tourist website of Turkey catering to your country (**www.gototurkey.com.au** in Australia, **www.turkishembassy.com** in Canada, **www.gototurkey.co.uk** in the U.K., and **www.tourismturkey.org** in the U.S.).

In addition to offices at Atatürk Airport (✆ **0212/465-3451** or 465-3151) and in Sirkeci train station (✆ **0212/511-5888**), you may stumble upon an official tourist office *(Turizm Ofisi)* in one of the many tourist hubs around town. The location at the northeast corner of Sultanahmet Meydanı near Divanyolu (✆ **0212/518-1802**) is pretty handy, as are the ones in Taksim Meydanı (✆ **0212/245-6876**), in the Hilton Hotel Arcade (✆ **0212/233-0592**), in Beyazıt Meydanı (near the tramway exit outside of the Grand Bazaar; ✆ **0212/522-4902**), and at the Karaköy Seaport (✆ **0212/249-5776**). If you're out and about and encounter trouble (pickpockets, scams, muggings), stop in to the passably multilingual **Tourism Police** at Yerebatan Cad. 6 in Sultanahmet (✆ **0212/527-4503** or 528-5369).

The Turkish Ministry of Culture (**www.kultur.gov.tr**) has an excellent website that contains cultural information, events, regional resources, and current-events articles. The site also offers virtual tours of state museums, as well as notable historic Ottoman palaces, mosques, and Byzantine-era churches. The Istanbul Governorship (**http://english.istanbul.gov.tr**) also maintains a website with travel information specific to Istanbul. Another great site for events listings in Istanbul and Ankara as well as useful general information is **www.mymerhaba.com**, created by expats for expats living in Turkey.

In the U.S., the **Turkish Government Tourist Office** has a presence in: 821 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017 (✆ **212/687-2194**); 2525 Massachusetts Ave., Ste. 306, Washington, DC 20008 (✆ **202/612-6800**); and 5055 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 850, Los Angeles, CA 90036 (✆ **323/937-8066**). At these offices, you can stock up on maps, brochures, ferry schedules to Greece, and access to practical information via an interactive computer database. Turkey also maintains consulates in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, and New York as well as honorary consulates in Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Detroit, Flowood (MS), Liberty (KS), San Francisco, and Seattle. For contact information, visit the embassy website, www.washington.emb.mfa.gov.tr.

Canadian requests go through the Washington, D.C., office. The Embassy in Canada is at 197 Wurtemburg St., Ottawa, ON K1N 8L9 (✆ **613/789-4044;** fax 613/789-3442; www.turkishembassy.com). You can also call the Consular Call Center at ✆ **888/566-7656**.

In the **U.K.,** contact the Turkish Culture & Tourism Office at 4th Fl., 29–30 St. James's St., London SW1A 1HB (✆ **020/7839-7778**). The embassy is at 43 Belgrave Sq., London SW1X 8PA (✆ **020/7393-0202;** fax 020/7393-0066; www.londra.be.mfa.gov.tr).

There are no travel offices in **Australia** or **New Zealand.** The embassy is at Canberra, 6 Moona Place, Yarralumla, ACT 2600 (✆ **02/6234-0000;** fax 02/6273-4402; www.kanberra.be.mfa.gov.tr).

WATER Water is an integral part of Turkish culture; when the French were perfecting the art of camouflaging fermenting bodily odors with perfume, the sultans were basting in spring water in a sky-lit marble chamber and doted on by a handful of naked members of the harem. But the reality is that the water you bathe in is not necessarily the water you want to drink. It certainly won't kill you if you do. But take it from someone with an iron constitution—it will *definitely* slow you down. Do yourself a favor: Drink bottled water and wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly before eating.

2 AIRLINE, HOTEL & CAR RENTAL WEBSITES

MAJOR AIRLINES

Air France
www.airfrance.com

Air New Zealand
www.airnewzealand.com

Alitalia
www.alitalia.com

American Airlines
www.aa.com

British Airways
www.ba.com

China Airlines
www.china-airlines.com

Continental Airlines
www.continental.com

Delta Air Lines
www.delta.com

EgyptAir
www.egyptair.com

El Al Airlines
www.el.co.il

Emirates Airlines
www.emirates.com

Etihad Airlines
www.etihadairways.com

Finnair
www.finnair.com

Iberia Airlines
www.iberia.com

Icelandair
www.icelandair.com

Israir Airlines
www.israirairlines.com

Japan Airlines
www.jal.co.jp

Lufthansa
www.lufthansa.com

Northwest Airlines
www.nwa.com

Olympic Airlines
www.olympicairlines.com

Qantas Airways
www.qantas.com

South African Airways
www.flysaa.com

Swiss International Air Lines
www.swiss.com

Turkish Airlines
www.thy.com

United Airlines
www.united.com

US Airways
www.usairways.com

Virgin America
www.virginamerica.com

Virgin Atlantic Airways
www.virgin-atlantic.com

BUDGET AIRLINES

Aegean Airlines
www.aegeanair.com

Aer Lingus
www.aerlingus.com

Air Berlin
www.airberlin.com

AirTran Airways
www.airtran.com

AnadoluJet
www.anadolujet.com

Atlasjet
www.atlasjet.com

Easyjet
www.easyjet.com

Frontier Airlines
www.frontierairlines.com

IZair
(Turkey based)
www.izair.com.tr

OnurAir
(Turkey based)
www.onurair.com.tr

Pegasus Airlines
www.flypgs.com

Ryanair
www.ryanair.com

SunExpress
(Turkey based)
www.sunexpress.com.tr

MAJOR HOTEL & MOTEL CHAINS

Best Western International
www.bestwestern.com

Crowne Plaza Hotels
www.ichotelsgroup.com/crowneplaza

Divan Hotels
www.divan.com.tr

Four Seasons
www.fourseasons.com

Hilton Hotels
www.hilton.com

Hyatt
www.hyatt.com

Inter-Continental Hotels & Resorts
www.ichotelsgroup.com

Kempinski Hotels
www.kempinski.com

The Marmara Hotels
www.themarmarahotels.com

Marriott
www.marriott.com

Mövenpick Hotels and Resorts
www.movenpick-hotels.com

Radisson Hotels & Resorts
www.radisson.com

Ramada Worldwide
www.ramada.com

Renaissance
www.renaissancehotels.com

Sheraton Hotels & Resorts
www.starwoodhotels.com/sheraton

Swissôtel
www.swissotel.com

CAR-RENTAL AGENCIES

Alamo
www.alamo.com

Auto Europe
www.autoeurope.com

Avis
www.avis.com

Budget
www.budget.com

Dollar
www.dollar.com

Enterprise
www.enterprise.com

Hertz
www.hertz.com

Kemwel (KHA)
www.kemwel.com

National
www.nationalcar.com

Sixt
www.sixt.com

Thrifty
www.thrifty.com

13 Useful Turkish Terms & Phrases

Turkish is the official language of Turkey, uniting not just its citizens, but also a diaspora of Turkish-speaking peoples throughout Asia. The Turkish language originated in the highlands of the Altay Mountains of central Asia and is heavily spoken in lands stretching from Turkey to China, including Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Özbekistan, Turkistan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizistan, Tajikistan, and Northern Cyprus. At the height of the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman language was a mélange of outside influences heavily infused with Arabic, the language of religion and law; Persian, the language of art and diplomacy; and French, well, just because it's French. Pure Turkish, spoken primarily in the home, was considered inappropriately informal and familiar for public use.

Atatürk was convinced that pride in one's language was critical in instilling a sense of nationalism in a people, and one of his landmark reforms was to uplift Turkish to its rightful and preeminent role as a national language. He began by purging foreign influences from the Turkish language and introducing the Latin alphabet. Words of Arabic origin still maintain a tremendous presence in daily usage, especially concerning religious matters, and knowledge of some foreign languages will nevertheless come in handy in places like the *kuaför* (coiffeur), the *asensör* (elevator, in French), or the *likör* (liquor) store. English is slowly creeping into the language, particularly in the area of technology, with words like *telefon, Internet,* and the less high-tech *seks.*

Turkish is an agglutinative language, which means that words (and sometimes whole sentences) get formed by tacking stuff onto the root. Each suffix has some grammatical function but also provides for a discreet amount of flexibility in shades of meaning. To make matters worse, the suffix must follow rules of spelling and phonetics, so that there are eight ways of expressing the word "of."

In 1924, when Atatürk introduced the mandatory use of the Latin alphabet, Turkish became a phonetic language and is pronounced exactly as it is written, making it relatively easy to read. Is it hard to learn? Compared to what? Will a novice's pronunciation be any worse than an American's attempt at getting his lips around French? Probably not. But Turks are so uncommonly adept at languages that in all likelihood your contact with Turkish will be kept to a minimum. In most major tourist areas and many secondary ones, the local merchant population speaks English, along with French, German, Spanish, Italian, Danish, and even Russian.

Even so, it's absolutely the minimum of courtesy to put yourself out there in an attempt to communicate a few words in the native language of the country you are visiting, and knowing a few basics will help you feel less isolated and helpless.

1 PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

VOWELS

a like the "a" in f*a*ther
â like "ya" (the circumflex adds a diphthong)
e like the "e" in b*e*d
i like the first "i" in *i*ndigo
ı like the "e" in th*e*
o like the "o" in h*o*pe
ö like the German "ö" or like the "u" in the English word f*u*rther
u like the "u" in super
ü like the French "u" or like the "u" in the English word f*u*neral

CONSONANTS

c like the "j" in *J*upiter
ç like the "ch" in *ch*urch
g like the "g" in *g*ather
ğ is silent and indicates that the preceding vowel should be elongated (*dağ* becomes "daaah," meaning "mountain")
h is *always* aspirated
j like the "s" in plea*s*ure
s like the "s" in *s*imple
ş like the "sh" in *sh*are

2 BASIC VOCABULARY

NUMBERS

1	bir	30	otuz
2	iki	40	kırk
3	üç	50	elli
4	dört	60	altmış
5	beş	70	yetmiş
6	altı	80	seksen
7	yedi	90	doksan
8	sekiz	100	yüz
9	dokuz	101	yüzbir
10	on	200	ikiyüz
11	onbir	1,000	bin
12	oniki	2,000	ikibin
20	yirmi	1,000,000	birmilyon
21	yirmibir	2,000,000	ikimilyon

DAYS OF THE WEEK

Sunday **Pazar**
Monday **Pazartesi** (literally, "the day after Sunday")
Tuesday **Salı**
Wednesday **Çarşamba**
Thursday **Perşembe**
Friday **Cuma**
Saturday **Cumartesi** (literally, "the day after Friday")

MONTHS OF THE YEAR

January **Ocak**
February **Şubat**
March **Mart**
April **Nisan**
May **Mayıs**
June **Haziran**
July **Temmuz**
August **Ağustos**
September **Eylül**
October **Ekim**
November **Kasım**
December **Aralık**

EXPRESSIONS OF TIME

1 hour **bir saat**
Morning **Sabah**
Afternoon **Öğleden sonra**
Night **Gece**
Yesterday **Dün**
Today **Bugün**
Tomorrow **Yarın**
What time is it? **Saat kaç?** (literally, "how many hours?")

USEFUL SUFFIXES

ci, cı, çi, çı, cu, cü, çu, çü indicates the seller of something
i, ı, u, ü indicates "of something" (an "s" is added after a vowel)
ler, lar makes a word plural
li, lı, lu, lü indicates the presence of something; "with"
siz, sız, suz, süz indicates the absence of something; "without"

USEFUL WORDS & PHRASES

Open **Açık**
Closed **Kapalı**
How much? **Kaç para?** (literally, "how much money?") or **Ne kadar?**
One ticket, please **Bir tane bilet, lütfen**
Gate (travel) **Kapı**
Where? Where is it? **Nerede?**
Where's the toilet? **Tuvalet nerede?**
Yes **Evet**

No **Hayır** *(higher)*
Please **Lütfen**

GREETINGS

Excuse me **Pardon** (French pronunciation) or **Afadersınız**
Hello **Merhaba**
Goodbye **Güle güle** (said by the one staying); **Allahaı Smarladık** (said by the one leaving)
Goodbye **Hoşça kalın** (an all-purpose goodbye)
Good day **Iyi günler**
Good evening **Iyi akşamlar**
Good morning **Günaydın**
Good night **Iyi geceler**
How are you? **Nasılsınız?**
I'm fine, thank you **Iyiyim, teşekkür ederim**
Pleased to meet you **Memnun oldun**
Thank you (formal) **Teşekkür ederim** (try to remember: "tea, sugar, a dream")
Thank you (casual) **Sağol**
Thank you **Mersi**
Welcome! **Hoş geldiniz!** (response: **Hoş bulduk**)

AT THE TABLE

Check, please! **Hesap, lütfen!**
Cheers! (drinking) **Şerefe!**
Do you have any dishes without meat? **Etsiz yemek var mı?**
Is there . . . ? **Var mı . . . ?** (question of availability, as in "süt var mı"—do you have any milk?)
Is there any meat stock in this dish? **Içinde et suyu var mı?**
There isn't any; no; none **Yok**
Very beautiful **Çok güzel** (said also when the food is good)
Well done! **Bravo!** or **Aferin!**

3 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acropolis Highest part of a Greek city reserved for the most important religious monuments
Ada(sı) Island
Ağa Arabic title given to commanders in the Ottoman military
Bahçe(sı) Garden
Bayanlar Ladies
Baylar Gentlemen
Bayram Arabic term meaning "feast," denoting several of the Muslim holidays
Bedesten Covered inn or marketplace
Bey Turkish title of courtesy following a man's first name meaning "Mr." as in "Mehmet bey"
Bulvarı Boulevard
Büyük Big
Caddesi Avenue
Caldarium Hottest section of a Roman bath

Caliph Literally "successor" to the prophet Mohammad; in the past, the title was held by the religious leader of the Islamic community and was known as "commander of the faithful"
Cami/camii Mosque; derived from the Arabic *jama* meaning "place of reunion"
Caravansary A fortified inn; Turkish spelling is *kervansaray*
Çarşı(sı) Market; bazaar
Celebi Nobleman
Çeşme Fountain
Cıkış Exit
Cumhuriyet Republic
Cuneiform Linear script inscribed into tablets; used by the ancient Mesopotamians and in Asia Minor
Deniz Sea
Derviş A member of a mystical order of Islam
Divan Word used to refer to the Ottoman governmental administration
Dolmuş Minibus, minivan, or any car that operates as a group taxi
Döviz Foreign currency
Eczane Pharmacy
Efendi Turkish title of courtesy following a first name meaning "sir" or "ma'am"
Emir Arabic title for a military commander or governor of a province
Ev/evi Home, house
Fatih Conqueror
Frigidarium The cold room of a Roman bath
Gar Station
Gazi Literally, "warrior"
Giriş Entrance
Gişe Ticket window
Hadith Traditions based on the words or actions of Mohammad
Hamam(ı) Turkish bath
Han(ı) Inn or caravansary
Hanım Address of respect meaning "lady"
Harem Women's quarters of a house (literally: "forbidden")
Havaalan(ı) or **hava liman(ı)** Airport
Hegira Literally, "the emigration"; *see* hicret
Hicret The date in 622 when Mohammad left Mecca for Yathrib (Medina) to escape local hostilities; this event marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar
Hijab From the Arabic *hajaba* meaning "to conceal"; used to mean any modest covering worn by a Muslim woman
Hisar Fortress
Iconoclasm 8th-century A.D. Christian movement that opposed all religious icons
Imam Literally "leader"; an educated religious guide
Iskele(sı) Wharf, quay, or dock
Janissaries The select corps of the Ottoman army
Jihad Literally, "struggle" or "striving" (Arabic; in Turkish: *cihad*)
Kaaba Muslim sacred shrine in Mecca
Kale(si) Castle or fortress
Kat Floor (of a building)
Kervansaray *See* caravansary
Kilim Flat-weave rug

Kilise Church
Konak/konağı Mansion
Koran The holy recitations of the Prophet Mohammad; Muslims believe that these revelations are the direct words of God
Küçük Small
Kule Tower
Külliye(sı) Religious and social complex consisting of mosque, school, and buildings for public use
Kümbet Literally, "cupola" or "dome"; synonym for *türbe*
Liman(ı) Port
Mahalle(sı) Neighborhood
Medrese Muslim theological school
Mescit Small prayer space; mini-mosque
Mevlana Title of respect meaning "Lord" (Arabic)
Meydan(ı) Public square
Meyhane Tavern, pub, or rowdy restaurant
Mihrab The niche in a mosque oriented toward Mecca
Minaret The towers of a mosque from which the *muezzin* chants the call to prayer
Minbar Pulpit
Muezzin The Muslim "cantor" of the call to prayer
Necropolis Ancient Greek or Roman cemetery
Oculus Round "skylight" in the top of a dome
Oda(sı) Room
Otogar Bus station
Pansiyon Pension, guesthouse
Paşa Title given to commanders in the Ottoman army (close to general) and to governors of provinces
Ramadan Islamic month of ritual fasting; Ramadan (*Ramazan* in Turkish) follows the lunar calendar, so that the festival is not confined to one season
Şadirvan Literally, "reservoir"; used for ablution fountains
Şarap Wine
Saray(ı) Palace
Şarcüteri Delicatessen
Satrap Persian governor of a province
Şehzade Crown prince
Selamlık In a traditional Turkish house, the part reserved for the men and the reception of guests
Sema Mystical dance of the Mevlevi order of the dervişes
Seraglio Sultan's palace
Sokak/sokağı Street
Stele Ancient tombstone
Sublime Porte Originally the main door of the palace where meetings of the divan were held; the term was eventually used to refer to the government, and the entire Ottoman Empire in general
Tepidarium The tepid room of a Roman bath; used for relaxation
Tuğra Sultan's imperial seal
Türbe(si) Turkish monumental funerary tomb
Ulu Great

Valide Sultan Turkish title equivalent to queen mother
Yalı Traditional wood Ottoman house, usually a secondary residence, built on the sea
Yol(u) Road (*karayolu:* highway or autobahn)
Yurt Nomadic tent, traditionally made of felt

4 THE TURKISH MENU

WHAT IS IT?

Alabalık Trout
Ananas Pineapple
Ançuez Anchovy
Balık Fish
Barbunya Red mullet
Beyin Brain
Bezelye Peas
Biber Pepper (*kara biber:* black pepper)
Bıldırcın Quail
Bonfile Filet of beef
Çam fıstığı Pine nut
Ciğer Liver
Çilek Strawberry
Çorba Soup
Çupra Sea bream
Dana Veal
Domates Tomato
Domuz Pork
Dondurma Ice cream
Ekmek Bread
Elma Apple
Enginar Artichoke
Erik Plum
Et Meat
Fasulye Bean
Havuç Carrot
Hindi Turkey
Ispanak Spinach
Istavrit Mackerel
Jambon Ham
Kabak Squash (zucchini, pumpkin, and the like)
Kalkan Turbot
Karides Shrimp
Karnıbahar Cauliflower
Karpuz Watermelon
Kavun Melon
Kayısı Apricot
Kaz Goose
Kefal Gray mullet
Kılıç Swordfish
Kiraz Cherry
Köfte Meatball
Kuzu Lamb
Lağus Grouper
Lavaş Grilled unleavened bread
Levrek Sea bass
Limon Lemon
Lüfer Bluefish
Mantar Mushroom
Marul Lettuce
Meyva Fruit
Meze Appetizer
Mezgit Cod
Mısır Corn
Mürekkep balığı Squid
Muz Banana
Ördek Duck
Palamut Bonito
Patates Potato
Patlıcan Eggplant/aubergine
Peynir Cheese
Pide Flatbread
Pilaf (pilâf) Rice
Piliç Chicken
Portakal Orange
Salatalik Cucumber
Sardalya Sardine
Şeftali Peach
Şeker Sugar
Sığır Beef
Soğan Onion
Som Salmon
Sosis Sausage
Tarak Scallop
Tatlılar Sweets
Tavuk Hen (for stewing)

Tereyağı Butter
Ton Tuna
Torik Large bonito
Tuz Salt
Un Flour
Üzüm Grapes
Yumurta Eggs
Zeytin Olive
Zeytinyağı Olive oil

HOW IS IT PREPARED?

Buğulama Steamed
Çevirme Meat roasted on a spit
Çiğ Raw
Doğranmış Chopped
Dolma Stuffed
Ezme Paste
Fırın Roasted or baked; oven
Füme Smoked
Guveç Earthenware dish; casseroles cooked in this pot
Haşlama Cooked, boiled
Izgara Grilled
Islim Braised
Kavurma Fried or roasted
Kebap Roasted
Pane Breaded and fried
Püre Purée
Rosto Roast meat
Saç Iron griddle for cooking over wood fires
Sahanda Fried
Şiş Skewer
Sote Sauté
Tandır Clay-lined oven
Taşım Boiled
Tava Fried

DRINKS

Ayran Yogurt drink made by the addition of water and salt
Bira Beer
Çay Tea
Kayısı suyu Apricot juice
Kiraz suyu Cherry juice
Kola Cola
Maden suyu or **soda** Carbonated mineral water
Meyve suyu Fruit juice
Portakal suyu Orange juice
Rakı Alcoholic drink made of aniseed and diluted with water
Şarap Wine
Şekerli With sugar
Şekersiz Unsweetened
Şişe suyu Bottled water
Soğuk içecekler Beverages
Su Water
Süt Milk
Suyu Juice

APPETIZERS

Ara sıcak Hot appetizers (translated literally, "in the middle hot")
Arnavut ciğeri Spicy fried liver with onions
Beyin haşlaması Boiled brain
Beyin kızartması Fried brain
Börek Flaky pastry, either baked or fried
Cacık Salad of yogurt, cucumber, and garlic; often served as a soup
Çiğ köfte Spicy raw meatballs

Çoban salatası Salad of tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, onions, and mint in olive oil and lemon
Ezme salatası Spicy relish of chopped tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, hot green chili peppers, onion, and parsley
Fesuliye piyası White bean with onion salad
Havuç salatası Carrot salad
Hibeş Spread of chickpeas, red pepper, onion, and yogurt
Humus Chickpea purée
Patlıcan salatası Purée of roasted eggplant (also served warm; also refers to eggplant sautéed with tomatoes and peppers)
Sigara böreği Fried phyllo "cigar" pastry filled with cheese
Soğuk mezeler Cold appetizers
Su böreği Baked phyllo filled with meat or cheese
Talaş böreği Puff pastry filled with meat
Yalancı dolması Stuffed grape leaves (no meat)
Yaprak dolması Stuffed grape leaves (sometimes with meat)

SOUPS

Balık çorbası Fish
Domatesli pirinç çorbası Tomato and rice
Et suyu Consommé
Ezo gelin çorbası Red lentil with bulgur and mint
Işkembe çorbası Tripe (also *kokoreç*)
Mantar corbası Mushroom
Mercimek çorbası Lentil
Sebze çorbası Vegetable

MEATS & KEBAPS

Adana kebabı Meatballs of spicy chopped lamb flattened and grilled on a skewer
Böbrek Kidney
Çöp kebabı Same as *çöp şiş*
Çöp şiş Small lamb cubes grilled on a skewer; also called *çöp kebabı*
Döner kebap Thin slices of lamb roasted on a vertical revolving spit
Içli köfte Corn or bulgur balls stuffed with minced lamb (boiled or fried)
Iskender kebabı Sliced *döner kebabı* served on a layer of *pide,* tomatoes, and yogurt, and covered with melted butter
Izgara köfte Grilled meatballs
Kadın budu köfte "Lady's thigh," meatballs of lamb and rice, deep-fried
Karışık izgara Mixed grill
Kuzu budu rostosu Roasted leg of lamb
Kuzu pirzolası Grilled lamb chops
Şiş kebabı Marinated lamb cubes grilled on a skewer

DESSERTS

Aşure Thick sweet pudding of whole wheat, mixed fruits, and nuts
Baklava Flaky pastries soaked in syrup or honey
Çukulatalı pudding Chocolate pudding
Fırın sütlaç Baked rice pudding

Hanım göbeği Honey-soaked flour pastry
Helva National favorite of semolina, sesame paste, or flour, sugar, and nuts
Kaymaklı kayısı tatlısı Poached apricots stuffed with cream
Krem karamel Crème caramel
Künefe Butter-soaked pastry filled with melted cheese, soaked in syrup, and served hot
Muhallebi Milk pudding
Revani Honey-soaked semolina
Sütlaç Rice pudding
Tatlılar Sweets or desserts
Tavukgöğsü Sweet chicken pudding

OTHER FAVORITE DISHES

Damat dolması Squash stuffed with ground lamb and nuts
Domates doması Stuffed tomatoes
Etli biber dolması Stuffed green peppers
Gözleme Folded savory pancake filled with potato, cheese, or meat
Hunkar beğendi Eggplant purée topped with lamb cubes (literally, "the sultan was pleased")
Imam bayıldı Stuffed eggplant (literally, "the imam fainted")
Lahmacun Fast food of thin crust dough topped with minced lamb, tomato, and onion
Mantı Meat dumplings topped with warm sauce of yogurt, garlic, and chili oil
Menemen Wet omelet of beaten eggs, tomato, and green peppers
Musakka Casserole of eggplant, vegetables, and ground lamb
Peynirli tost Grilled cheese sandwich (also called *tost*)
Simit Sesame seed–coated soft pretzel

INDEX

See also Accommodations and Restaurant indexes, below.

General Index

Abdulla Natural Products, 222
Accommodations, 54–56, 70–94. *See also* Accommodations Index
near the airport, 93–94
the Asian side, 92–93
best, 7, 70–71
Beyazıt and the Grand Bazaar area, 79–80
Beyoğlu, 81–90
the Bosphorus area, 90–92
Bursa, 245–246
choosing a neighborhood, 71–72
Cihangir, 85
The Historic Peninsula, 72–81
north of Beyoğlu, 88
Sirkeci, 80–81
Taksim, 81–85
Tünel and Tepebaşı, 85–87
Ahmet III Fountain, 138
Ahmet III Library, 144
Ahrida Sinagogue, 175
Air travel, 38–39
Akbank Jazz Festival, 36
AKM (Atatürk Cultural Center), 229
Akmerkez Mall, 222
Aksaray, 59, 174
Alexander the Great, 13, 164
Sarcophagus, 136
10th-century mosaic of, 128
Alisami Yen, 190
Al Jamal, 231
Alman Çeşmesi (Fountain of Wilhelm II), 135
American Research Institute in Turkey, 188–189
Anadolu Kavağı, 62, 184
Anatolian Dolls, 219
Ancient Nicaea, 248–249
Anemas Dungeon, 204
Anjelique, 235
Antiques, shopping for, 212–214
Antiques market, 212
Antrepo No. 3, 167
Apartment of the Valide Sultan, 145
Arap Camii (Arab Mosque), 180–181, 196
Arasta Bazaar, 210
Archaeology Museum (Arkeoloji Müzesi; Bursa), 241
Architecture, 23–24
Arch of Theodosius, 171
Area codes, 253
Arkeoloji Müzesi (Istanbul Archaeology Museum), 136–137, 189
Art, 24–25
contemporary art scene, 167–169
shopping for, 213–214
workshops in Ottoman arts, 170
Art House, 216
Artrium, 213
Artyama, 222
The Asian side
accommodations, 92–93
restaurants, 120
sights and attractions, 185–187
Astoria, 222
Atatürk, 20
Anniversary of Atatürk's Death, 36
Atatürk International Airport, 38–40
Atatürk Kültür Merkezi (Atatürk Cultural Center), 181, 299
Atatürk Museum (Atatürk Müzesi; Bursa), 241
Atik Ali Paşa Camii, 172
The Atik Mustafapaşa Camii (Cabil Camii), 175, 205
ATMs (automated teller machines), 47
Atomik Saat Galerisi, 213
Australia
consulate, 253
customs regulations, 38
international calls from, 53
visas, 37
visitor information in, 256
Avrupa Pasajı, 178, 218
Ayadimitri Kilisesi (St. Demetrios Kanavis Kilisesi), 175, 205
Ayakapi, 177–178
Aya Nikola Kilisesi, 177
Ayasofya, 124–125, 128, 130
Aya Triada Ermeni Katolik Kilisesi, 182
Ayazma (Sacred Spring), 175–176, 205
Aynez, 219
Ayvansaray, 175

Babüssaade (Gate of Felicity), 139
Babylon, 230
Bagdat Caddesi, 185
Baghdad Kiosk, 142
Balat, 60, 175
restaurants, 107
sights and attractions, 206–208
Balat Market, 206
Balıkpazarı (Galatasaray Fish Market), 178
Balino Rum Kilisesi, 205
Barbahçe, 227
Bargaining, 210
Barracks of the Black Eunuchs, 144
Bars, 232–236
Bazaars, covered, 210–211
Bedestan, 213

Bereket Han, 195
Beşiktaş, 57, 62, 190
restaurants, 118–120
sights and attractions, 182–183
Beşiktaş, Fenerium, Galatasaray Store, 219–220
Beşinci Kat, 233
Beverages, 29–30
Beyazıt
accommodations, 79–80
sights and attractions, 171–174
Beyazıt Mosque (Beyazıt Camii), 154–156
Beylerbeyı, 63
Beylerbeyi Palace (Beylerbeyi Sarayı), 161
Beyman, 217–218
Beymen Home, 220
Beyoğlu, 57, 60
accommodations, 81–90
north of Beyoğlu, 88–90
nightlife, 233–236
restaurants, 109–120
sights and attractions, 178–185
Beyoğlu Hospital, 194
Biennial, 35–36, 229
Big Island (Büyükada), 250
Biletix, 36
Binbirdirek Sarnıçı (The Philoxenus Cistern), 169, 197
Blackk, 235
Blue Mosque (Sultan Ahmet Camii), 130–132
Boat travel and cruises, 41
along The Bosphorus, 183–184
Bodrum Camii (the Myrelaion), 172
Books, recommended, 30
Bookstores, 214–215
The Bosphorus area
accommodations, 90–92
mega-clubs, 226
nightlife, 235
sights along, 183–185
Bozdoğan Kemeri (Valens Aqueduct), 152
British Council, 188
Bucoleon Palace, 169
Bulgar Kilisesi (St. Stephen of the Bulgars), 177
Burgazada, 251
Bursa, 237–248
accommodations, 245–246
exploring, 240–245
getting around, 240
history of, 237–238
orientation, 240
restaurants, 246–248
traveling to, 238, 240
Bursa Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts (Türk Islam Eser. Müzesi), 241
Business hours, 253
Bus travel, 41, 43–44
Büyükada (Big Island), 190, 250
Büyük and Küçük Çamlıca, 186
Byzantine sights and attractions, 146–152

Cabil Camii (The Atik Mustafapaşa Camii), 205
Çadırcılar Caddesi, 216–217
Caferağa Medresesi, 169, 170, 223
Cağaloğlu Hamamı, 153
The Cage (Topkapı Palace), 145
Calendar of events, 33–37
The Camondo House, 194–195
Camondo Staircase, 195
Canada
consulate, 253
customs regulations, 38
international calls from, 53
visas, 37
visitor information in, 256
Cankurtaran, 58
Capitol Shopping Mall, 222
Carousel Shopping Mall, 222
Carpets, 215–217
buying tips, 212
Car rentals, 42
Carriage Gate, 144
Car travel, 40, 41–42
Caudelie Vinotherapie Spa at Les Ottomans, 188
Caviar, 218
Çedik Papuçlu Sokak, 204
Çelebi, Ahmet (Hazarfen), 147
Cellphones, 53–54
Çemberlitaş, 58
Çemberlitaş Hamamı, 153
Çengelköy, 62–63
Ceramics, 216–217
Ceremonial thrones (Topkapı Palace), 140
Cezayir, 233
Chianti, 227
Children, families with, 50–51
sights and attractions for, 190
Christianity, 14
Christie, Agatha, 88
Chrysopolis, 185–186
Churches. ***See also specific churches***
best, 6
etiquette for entering, 156
opening hours for, 124
Church of Aya Sofya (Nicaea), 248
Church of St. Mary of Blachernae, 175–176
Church of SS. Peter and Paul, 181, 195
Church of St. Theodore, 172
Church of Theotokos Pammakaristos (Joyous Mother of God Church, now Fethiye Camii), 146
Church of the Pantocrator (Zeyrek Camii), 174
Church of the Saints Sergius and Bacchus (Küçük Ayasofya Camii), 150
Cibali, 177–178
Çiçek Pasajı (Flower Passage), 178
Cihangir, 61
accommodations, 85
restaurants, 112–113
Çinili Camii, 186
Çinili Köşk, 137
Çırağan Palace, 161–162
Çırağan Palace Hotel
gallery in, 168
Sanitas Spa at the, 188
Circumcision rooms, 143
City Farm, 53
City's, 222
Climate, 33
Coffee, 29
Column of Constantine, 170
Constantine, 14
Constantinople, 14, 16, 30, 124
defensive walls, 164–167
Consulates and embassies, 253
Contemporary Istanbul Art Festival, 37
Cooking classes, 52
Copper objects, 216–217
Çorlulu Alipaşa Medrese, 232
Coronation Square, 128
Courier services, 253

Court of the Janissaries, 138
Courtyard of the Favorites (Topkapı Palace), 145
Covered Bazaar (Bedesten; Bursa), 240, 241
Covered bazaars, 210–211
Crafts, traditional, 223–224
Credit cards and debit cards, 47–48
Credo Tours, 49
Crown Prince Mosque Complex (Şehzade Külliyesi), 159
Çuhacılar Hanı, 133
Cuisine, 28–29. *See also* Restaurants
cooking classes, 52
stores and markets, 218–219
street food, 108
Çukurcuma, 62
Culinary travel, 52
Cumhuriyet Anıtı/Republican Monument, 182
Cumhuriyet Bayramı (Republic Day), 36
Currency and currency exchange, 46–47
Customs regulations, 37–38

Dandalo, Enrico, alleged tomb of, 128
Debit cards, 47–48
Deesis, 128
Deniz Müzesi (Naval Museum), 182–183
Dentists, 253
Derimod, 221
Dersaadet Şark Kahvesi, 232
Derviş, 222
Design Zone, 220
Dietary red flags, 48
Dining, 8–9, 95–120. *See also* Restaurant Index
the Asian side, 120
Balat, 107
Beşiktaş and the Bosphorus villages, 118–120
best, 95–97
Beyoğlu, 109–120
Edirnekapi, 107
Fatih, 107
Galatasaray, Tepebaşi, and Tünel, 113–116
Galata Tower, 116
Golden Horn/Hasköy, 118
the Grand Bazaar, 106
Gümüşsuyu, 113
the Historic Peninsula, 100–109
north of Beyoğlu, 116–118
from Samatya to the airport, 107–109
Sultanahmet, 102–106
Taksim, 109–113
tips on, 96–97
with a view, 102
Disabilities, travelers with, 50
Divan (Imperial Council Hall), 144
Divanyolu, 58
Dolmabahçe Palace (Dolmabahçe Sarayı), 162–163
Dormitory of the Pages of the Imperial Treasury, 143
Dress code, 22
Drinking laws, 253
Drugstores and pharmacies, 253–254
Dutch History and Archaeology Institute Library, 189

Eastern Orthodox Easter Sunday, 34
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, 146–147, 207
Edirnekapı (Gate of Charisius), 202
Edirnekapı, restaurants, 107
Efes Pilsen Blues Festival, 36
Eğrikapı Mumhanı Caddesi, 204
Egin Tekstil, 222–223
Egyptian Spice Bazaar (Mısır Carsışı), 158, 210–211
800 Years of Love, 231
Ekolojik Halk Pazarı, 53
Ekolojik Pazarı, 212–213
Electricity, 254
Eller Art Gallery, 221
Embassies and consulates, 253
Emergencies, 254
Eminönü
bars, 232–233
sights and attractions, 169–178
Emir Han (Bursa), 240
Enginar, 233
Entry requirements, 37
Erbakan, Necmettin, 22
Eresin Crown Hotel, Byzantine artifacts, 198
Eski Kaplıca (Bursa), 246
EthniCon, 223
Etiquette and customs, 22–23
Eyüp, 67
Eyüp Sultan Mosque (Eyüp Sultan Camii), 156–157

Families with children, 50–51
sights and attractions for, 190
Fatih, 57–60
restaurants, 107
Fatih Festivities, 34
Fatih Mosque and Complex (Fatih Camii ve Külliyesi), 157
Fener, 60, 175
Fenerbahçe, 190
Fenerbahçe Stadium, 190
Fener Rum Erkek Lisesi (Fener Roman Boys School), 207
Ferries, 41, 45–46
Ferruh Kethüda Camii, 206
Fidan Han (Bursa), 240
Firat Cultural Center (FKM), 231
Flea market, 212
Florence Nightingale Museum, 187
Flower Passage (Çiçek Pasajı), 178
Food and cuisine, 28–29. *See also* Restaurants
cooking classes, 52
stores and markets, 218–219
street food, 108
Food poisoning and diarrhea, 48
Foundation Carpet Museum (Vakıflar Halı Müzesi), 171
Fountain of Wilhelm II (Alman Çeşmesi), 135
Four Seasons The Bosphorus, spa at, 189
Free or almost free activities, 7
Fruit Room (Topkapı Palace), 145
Funicular, 45

Galata Bridge, 232
Galata Dernegi, 195
Galata Mevlevihanesi, 178–179, 192
Galata Meydanı, 193–194
Galata neighborhood, 61, 147–150
restaurants, 116
sights and attractions, 147–150, 180–181
Turkish folkloric show, 231
walking tour, 191–196
Galatasaray
restaurants, 113–116
sights and attractions, 178–180
Galatasaray (soccer club), 190
Galatasaray Fish Market (Balıkpazarı), 178, 218
Galatasaray High School (Galatasaray Lisesi), 179
Galata Tower, 149–150, 193
Galeri Kayseri, 214
Galeri Nev, 168
Galerist, 168
Galip Dede Caddesi, 192
Galleria Shopping Mall, 222
Gallery Apel, 168
Garajistanbul, 230
Gasoline, 254
Gate of Felicity (Babüs-saade), 139
Gate of Petrion, 208
Gate of Salutation, 139
Gay and lesbian travelers, 50
nightlife, 227–228
German Archaeology Institute Library, 189
German Hospital, 254
Gestures, 22–23
Ghetto, 230
Gifts and souvenirs, 219–220
Golden Road, 146
The Grand Bazaar (Kapalı Çarşısı), 132–134
shopping in, 211
The Grand Bazaar area
accommodations, 79–80
cafes and eateries, 134
restaurants, 106
sights and attractions, 171–174
The Great Mosque (Ulu Camii; Bursa), 241–242
The Great Palace, 149
Greek settlements, early, 13
Green Mosque (Yeşil Camii; Bursa), 242
Green Tomb (Yeşil Türbesi; Bursa), 242–243
Gül Camii, 177–178
Güllüoğlu, 108, 160
Gümüşsuyu, restaurants, 113

Hacı Bekir, 218
Hacivat, 244
Hagia Eirene (St. Irene), 138–139
Haliç, 57
***Hamams* (Turkish baths), 152–155**
taking a bath, 154–155
Handicrafts, traditional, 223–224
Harem (Topkapı Palace), 143–145
Haseki Sultan Hamamı, 153
Havusbaşı Çay Bahcesi (Pond Head Tea Garden), 151
Hazarfen, 147
Health concerns, 48–49
medical requirements for entry, 38
Heybeliada, 251
Hıdrellez Festival, 34
Hippodrome, 131, 134–135
Hiref, 220
Hırka-i Şerif Camii (Mosque of the Holy Mantle), 174
The Historic Peninsula, 57
accommodations, 72–81
restaurants, 100–109
History of Istanbul, 12–22
Byzantine era, 14, 16
early Greek settlements, 13
Ottoman era, 16–18
prehistory, 13
under Roman rule, 13–14
statehood, 20
Tulip Period, 17
at the turn of the 21st century, 21–22
World War II through the Cold War, 20–21
Holidays, 254
Holy Mantle, 143
Holy Relic Section (Topkapı Palace), 143
Homer Kitabevi, 214
Horhor Bit Pazarı, 213
Hospitals, 254
Hotel lounges, 226
Hotels, 54–56, 70–94. *See also* Accommodations Index
near the airport, 93–94
the Asian side, 92–93
best, 7, 70–71
Beyazıt and the Grand Bazaar area, 79–80
Beyoğlu, 81–90
the Bosphorus area, 90–92
Bursa, 245–246
choosing a neighborhood, 71–72
Cihangir, 85
The Historic Peninsula, 72–81
north of Beyoğlu, 88
Sirkeci, 80–81
Taksim, 81–85
Tünel and Tepebaşı, 85–87
Hünkar Kasrı, 157–158

Iftariye Pavilion, 142
Imperial Armory, 144
Imperial Council Hall (Divan), 144
Imperial Gate, 125
Imperial Reception Hall, 145
Imperial Stables, 171
Inönü Stadium, 190
Insurance, 254
International Driving Permit (IDP), 40
International Hospital, 253, 254
International Istanbul Biennial, 35–36, 229
International Istanbul Festival, 229
International Istanbul Film Festival, 34
International Istanbul Music Festival, 34
International Jazz Festival, 35
Internet access, 54
Ipek Han (Bursa), 240
Iskele Camii (Mihrimah Camii), 187
Islam, 26–27
Islam Bilim ve Teknoloji Tarıhı Müzesi (Museum of the History of Islamic Science and Technology), 170–171
Istanbul Archaeology Museum (Arkeoloji Müzesi), 136–137, 189

Istanbul Arts Festival, 229
Istanbul Culinary Institute, 52
Istanbul Dance & Rhythm Ensemble, 231
Istanbul Deniz Otobüsleri, 41, 184
Istanbul Handicrafts Center (Istanbul Sanatları Çarşısı), 224
Istanbul Jazz Center, 230
Istanbul Kahvehanesi, 153
Istanbul Kapısı (Nicaea), 248
Istanbul Kitapçısı, 214
Istanbul Library, 189
Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, 168–169
Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra, 229
Istanbul State Opera and Ballet, 229
***Istanbul Through the Ages* exhibit, 136**
Istiklal Caddesi, 61, 211
Istinye Park, 222
Italian Catholic Church (St. Antoine Italyan Katolik Kilisesi), 182
Itineraries, suggested, 63–69
Ivas Efendi Mosque, 204
Iznik, 248–249
The Iznik Foundation, 216, 249
Iznik Museum, 249

James Joyce Irish Pub, 233
Janissaries, 17–19, 166
Jason and the Argonauts, 163
Jewelry, 221
Jewish Museum of Turkey (Zulfaris Museum), 148, 196
Jews, 148
Joyous Mother of God Church (Church of Theotokos Pammakaristos, now the Fethiye Camii), 146

Kabasakal Medresi, 170
Kadıköy, 63, 185, 187
Kadirga Limanı, 58
Kalenderhane Camii, 172–173
Kalpakçilar Caddesi, 134
Kanlıca, 62, 185
Kanlı Kilise (St. Mary of the Mongols), 176
Kanyon, 222
Kapalı Çarşısı (The Grand Bazaar), 132–134
shopping, 211
Karagöz, 244
Karagöz Hacivat Memorial (Bursa), 244
Karaköy, 61
sights and attractions, 180–181
Karaköy Square, 196
Kara Mustafa Paşa Thermal Bath (Bursa), 247
Kariye Müzesi (St. Savior in Chora; formerly the Kariye Camii), 150–151, 202
Kaynarca (Bursa), 247
Khaftan Art and Antiques, 213–214
***Kilims,* 216**
Kınalıada, 250–251
Kırkpınar Oil Wrestling Tournaments, 35
Kıyıcı Genuine Fake Bags, 221
Kız Kulesi (Leander's Tower), 186
Koç American Hospital, 253
Koza Hanı (Bursa), 240, 243
Küçük Ayasofya Camii (Church of the Saints Sergius and Bacchus), 150
Kumkapı, 58
streets of, 232
Kurban Bayramı, 36–37
Kürkçüler Han, 133
Kurukahveci Mehmet, 218

La Cave, 219
Language, 254
useful terms and phrases, 260–269
Laundromats, 254
Laveda Spa, Ritz-Carlton's, 189
La Vie en Rose, 220
Layout of Istanbul, 57–63
Leander's Tower (the Maiden's Tower or Kız Kulesi), 186
Leather goods, 221
Legal aid, 254–255
Leonardo da Vinci, 161
Les Arts Turcs, 170
Levant Koleksiyon, 220
LGBT travelers, 50
nightlife, 227–228
Librairie de Pera, 192, 214
Live music and nightclubs, 230–232
Lodging, 54–56, 70–94. *See also* Accommodations Index
near the airport, 93–94
the Asian side, 92–93
best, 7, 70–71
Beyazıt and the Grand Bazaar area, 79–80
Beyoğlu, 81–90
the Bosphorus area, 90–92
Bursa, 245–246
choosing a neighborhood, 71–72
Cihangir, 85
The Historic Peninsula, 72–81
north of Beyoğlu, 88
Sirkeci, 80–81
Taksim, 81–85
Tünel and Tepebaşı, 85–87
Loge of the Empress, 128
Lycian tomb, 136

Maçka, 62
Macrocenter, 53
The Magnaura (Senate House), 200
Magnetic Column, 135
The Maiden's Tower (Leander's Tower), 186
Mail, 255
Malls and shopping centers, 222
Markets
organic food, 53
outdoor, 211–213
street, 210–211
Marmara Lines, 41
Marmara Sea Walls, 165
Mavi Jeans, 218
Medical requirements for entry, 38
Medline, 254
Medusa heads, 152
Mehter Band, 157, 158, 180
Meşale Çay Bahçesi, 232
Metochion of Mount Sinai, 176, 207
Metrocity, 222
Metro Han, 192
Metropolitan Florence Nightingale Hospital, 254
The Metro/Underground, 45

Midnight Express (movie), 31
Mihrimah Camii (Iskele Camii or Mihrimah Sultan Camii), 187
Military Museum, 180
Million (Milion) Stone, 136
Mineral springs (thermal baths), Bursa, 246–247
Miniaturk, 190
Mısır Carsışı (Egyptian Spice Bazaar), 68, 158, 210–211
Mohammed Chamber, 143
Money and costs, 46–48
Mosaic Museum, 150, 198
Mosque of the Holy Mantle (Hırka-i Şerif Camii), 174
Mosques, 154. *See also specific mosques*
  best, 6
  etiquette for entering, 156
  opening hours for, 124
  recurring elements of, 132
Mosquitoes, 49
Mudo, 220
Muradiye Complex (Muradiye Külliye; Bursa), 243–244
Murat III, Private Chambers of, 145
Murder on the Orient Express (movie), 88
Museum of Calligraphy (Türk Vakıf Sanatları Müzesi), 173
Museum of Energy at SantralIstanbul, 190
Museum of the Ancient Orient, 137
Museum of the History of Islamic Science and Technology (Islam Bilim ve Teknoloji Tarıhı Müzesi), 170–171
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, 137–138
Museum of Turkish Ceramics, 137
Museums, best, 6
Music, 25–26
  live music and nightclubs, 230–232
Mustafa Paşa Kiosk, 142
The Myrelaion (Bodrum Camii), 172

Nakkaş Store & 6th-Century-A.D. Cistern, 198
Namlı Gurme Gida, 219
Nardis Jazz Club, 230
National Sovereignty and Children's Day, 34
Naval Museum (Deniz Müzesi), 182–183
Neighborhoods
  in brief, 57–60
  sights and attractions by, 121–124
Neve Shalom Synagogue, 148, 194
Nevişade Street, 178
The New Queen Mother's Mosque (Yeni Valide Camii or Yeni Camii), 158–159
Newspapers and magazines, 255
New Zealand
  customs regulations, 38
  international calls from, 53
  visas, 37
Nicaea, 248–249
Nightlife, 225–236
  cover charges, 226
  gay, 227–228
  local bar scene, 232–236
  performing arts, 228–232
  Taksim, Tünel, and Beyoğlu, 233
  tickets, 227
Nilüfer Hatun Imareti (Nicaea), 248
Northern Wing (Istanbul Archaeology Museum), 136
The North Shield, 232
Nostalgic Tramway, 192
NuPera, 234
Nuruosmaniye Külliyesi, 173

Obelisk
  of Adad-Nirari III, 137
  of Tutmosis III, 135
Offense, avoiding, 23
Olive oil, 219
Olivium, 222
Or-Ahayim Balat Hastanesi (Balat Jewish Hospital), 254
Orhan Camii (Orhan Gazi Mosque; Bursa), 244
Orient Express, 173
Ortaköy, 211
  nightlife, 226
Osman and Orhan, Tombs of (Bursa), 244–245
Otto Istanbul, 234
Ottoman Bank, 196
Ottoman Empire, 16–18
Ottomania, 214
Ottoman Mehter Band, 158
Özdilek (Bursa), 240

Palace Clothing Exhibition (Topkapı Palace), 140
Palace Kitchens (Topkapı Palace), 139
The Palace of Constantine Porphyrogenitus (Tekfur Sarayı), 177, 203–204
Paracclesion, 151
Parantez Bistro, 234
Paşabahçe, 220–221
Passports, 255
The Patriarchal Main Gate, 208
Pazart, 213
Pegasus, 221
Pera, 61
Pera Museum, 180
Performing arts, 228–232
Peristyle Courtyard, 150
Petrion Gate, 208
Petrol, 254
Pharmacies, 253–254
The Philoxenus Cistern (Binbirdirek Sarnıçı), 169, 197
Photography, 23
Pirinç Han (Bursa), 240
Planning your trip, 32–56
  accommodations, 54–56
  customs regulations, 37–38
  entry requirements, 37–38
  health concerns, 48–49
  money and costs, 46–48
  safety concerns, 49–50
  specialized travel resources, 50–52
  staying connected, 53–54
  sustainable tourism, 52–53
  traveling to Istanbul, 38–41
  when to go, 33
Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center, 167
Police, 255
Polonezköy, 251–252
Pond Head Tea Garden (Havusbaşı Çay Bahcesi), 151
Prehistory, Istanbul in, 13
Prens Leather, 221
Prescription medications, 48
Presidential Cycling Tour, 34
Press Museum, 231
The Princes' Islands, 249–251

Private Chambers of Murat III, 145
Proje4L/Elgiz Çağdaş Sanat Müzesi, 168
Public transportation, 43–46

Rabies, 48–49
Rahmi M. Koç Museum, 190
Ramadan, 35
Reading Room (Topkapı Palace), 145
Reina, 235
Republican Monument/Cumhuriyet Anıtı, 182
Republic Day (Cumhuriyet Bayramı), 36
Restaurants, 8–9, 95–120. ***See also*** **Restaurant Index**
the Asian side, 120
Balat, 107
Beşiktaş and the Bosphorus villages, 118–120
best, 95–97
Beyoğlu, 109–120
Edirnekapi, 107
Fatih, 107
Galatasaray, Tepebaşi, and Tünel, 113–116
Galata Tower, 116
Golden Horn/Hasköy, 118
the Grand Bazaar, 106
Gümüşsuyu, 113
the Historic Peninsula, 100–109
north of Beyoğlu, 116–118
from Samatya to the airport, 107–109
Sultanahmet, 102–106
Taksim, 109–113
tips on, 96–97
with a view, 102
Ritz-Carlton's Laveda Spa, 189
Robinson Crusoe, 215
Roman Theatre (Nicaea), 249
Rooftop bars, 226
Rumeli Fortress (Rumeli Hisarı), 184
Rüstem Paşa Külliyesi, 174

Sabancı Museum in Emirgan, 184–185
Sadberk Hanım Museum, 184
Safety concerns, 49–50
for single men, 228
Safran Han, 133
Sahaflar Çarşısı, 214
St. Antoine Italyan Katolik Kilisesi (Italian Catholic Church), 182
St. Demetrios Kanavis Kilisesi (Ayadimitri Kilisesi), 175, 205
St. Irene (Hagia Eirene), 138–139
St. Mary of Blachernae, Church of, 175–176
St. Mary of the Mongols (Kanlı Kilise), 176
St. Savior in Chora (Kariye Müzesi; formerly the Kariye Camii), 150–151, 202
St. Stephen of the Bulgars (Bulgar Kilisesi), 177, 207–208
SS. Peter and Paul, Church of, 181, 195
St. Theodore, Church of, 172
Sanda Spa, 189
Sanitas Spa at the Çıağan Palace, 188
Santrallstanbul, 167
Şarabı, 234
Şarabı Wine Bar, 201
Sarayburnu, 58
Sarcophagus of the Crying Women, 136
Sarıyer, 184
Sarnıç, 200
Schneidertempel, 195
Şedir's Carpet Shop, 198
Şehzade Külliyesi (Crown Prince Mosque Complex), 159
Şeker Bayramı, 36
Selimiye Barracks/Florence Nightingale Museum, 187
Senate House (The Magnaura), 200
Senior travel, 52
The Şerefiye or Theodosius Sarniç, 197–198
Serpentine Column, 135
Seven Towers Fortress (Yedikule), 166–167
Shopping, 209–224
bargaining, 210
best buys, 10–11, 209–210
covered bazaars and street markets, 210–211
local lingo, 209
markets
organic food, 53
outdoor, 211–213
street, 210–211
Side trips from Istanbul, 237–252
Sights and attractions, 121–190
the Asian side, 185–187
Beyazıt and the Grand Bazaar area, 171–174
Beyoğlu, 178–185
Byzantine, 146–152
Constantinople's defensive walls, 164–167
contemporary art scene, 167–169
Galata and Karaköy, 180–181
Galatasaray, Tünel, and Tepebaşi, 178–180
for kids, 190
libraries and cultural centers, 188–189
mosques, tombs, and monuments, 154–160
by neighborhood, 121–124
palaces of the sultans, 160–164
top sights, 124–146
Sinan, tomb of, 160
Single women travelers, 51
Sirkeci, accommodations, 80–81
Sirkeci Station, 40
Şişli, 62
Six-Winged Seraphim, 128
Smoking, 255
Snake's head from the Serpentine Column, 136
Soccer, 190
Sofa Art and Antiques, 214
Sofa Hotel, Taylife Spa at the, 189
Sofa Köşkü, 142
Soğukçeşme Sokağı, 171
Sokullu Mehmet Paşa Camii, 159
Sound and Light Show, 231
Spas, 188
Spectator sports, 190
Sphendome, 151–152
Spherion, 134
Spirit of Anatolia, 231
Spoonmaker's Diamond, 142
State Theatre Company, 229
Streetcars, 44–45
Suada, 235–236
Sufi Music Concert & Sema Ceremony (ceremony of the Whirling Dervishes), 179
Sugarclub Café, 227–228

Süleymaniye Hamamı, 153
Süleymaniye Mosque and Complex (Süleymaniye Camii ve Külliyesi), 159–160
Süleyman the Lawgiver (The Magnificent), 16–17, 24, 144
sword belonging to, 140
Sultanahmet, 58
bars, 232–233
restaurants, 102–106
sights and attractions, 169–171
Sultan Ahmet Camii (Blue Mosque), 130–132
Sultanahmet Prison, 171
Sultan Kayıkları, 183
Sunset Bar and Grill, 236
Süreyya Opera House, 229–230
Surp Yerrortuyan (Üc Horon Ermeni Kilisesi), 178
Sustainable tourism, 52–53
The Symplegades, 163

Tahtakale Hamamı, 153
Taksim
accommodations, 81–85
nightlife, 233–236
restaurants, 109–113
sights and attractions, 181–182
Taksim Maksemi (Water Distribution), 182
Taksim Square, 61, 68
Taps, 234
Tarıhı Eminönü Balıkçısı, 108
Tarıhı Galatasaray Hamamı, 153
Tarıhı Kanlıca Yoğurdu, 187
Tarlabaşı, 61
Taxes, 255
hotel, 56
Taxis, 42
at nightclubs, 227
Taylife Spa at the Sofa Hotel, 189
Tea, 29
Tekfur Sarayı (The Palace of Constantine Porphyrogenitus), 177, 203–204
Telephones, 53–54
Temperatures, 33
Tepebaşı
accommodations, 85–87
restaurants, 113–116
sights and attractions, 178–180
Teutonia, 193
Textiles, 222–223
The Theodosian Land Walls, 165–166, 202–203
Theotokos Pammakaristos, Church of (Joyous Mother of God Church, now the Fethiye Camii), 146
Thermal baths (mineral springs), Bursa, 246–247
360 Istanbul, 235
Throne Room (Topkapı Palace), 140
Time zone, 255
Tipping, 255
Toilets, 255–256
Toklu Dede Tekkesi, 204
Tombs of Osman and Orhan (Bursa), 244–245
***Topkapı* (movie), 142**
Topkapı Dagger, 140, 142
Topkapı Palace (Topkapı Sarayı), 9, 66
sightseeing, 138–146
Tourism Police, 256
Tower of Isaac Angelus, 204
Train travel, 40
Trams, 44
Transit passes, 43
Transportation, 43–46
Traveler's checks, 48
Traveling to Istanbul, 38–41
The Treasury (Topkapı Palace), 140
Treaty of Kadesh, tablets of, 137
Tropical illnesses, 49
Trotsky, Leon, 250
True Cross, 136
Trust Leather, 221
T Shop, 220
Tulip Festival, 34
Tulip Period (Lâle Devri), 17
Tünel, 61, 201
accommodations, 85–87
nightlife, 233–236
restaurants, 113–116
sights and attractions, 178–180
Tünel Pasajı, 180
Turkish baths *(hamams)*, 152–155
taking a bath, 154–155
Turkish Flavours, 52
Turkish Government Tourist Office, 256
Türk Islam Eser. Müzesi (Bursa Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts), 241
Türku Evi, 231
***Türkü Evleri*, 225, 226**
Türk Vakıf Sanatları Müzesi (Museum of Calligraphy), 173

Üc Horon Ermeni Kilisesi (Surp Yerrortuyan), 178
Ulu Camii (The Great Mosque; Bursa), 241–242
Ulus 29, 236
Uluumay Ottoman Museum (Bursa), 245
Underground Istanbul, walking tour, 197–201
Underground Mosque (Yeraltı Camii), 181, 201
United Kingdom
consulate, 253
customs regulations, 38
international calls from, 53
visas, 37
visitor information in, 257
United States
consulate, 253
customs regulations, 38
international calls from, 53
visitor information in, 257
Urart Ateliers, 221
Üsküdar, 63, 185–187

Vakıflar Halı Müzesi (Foundation Carpet Museum), 171
Vakko, 218
Valde Han, 133
Valens Aqueduct (Bozdoğan Kemeri), 152
VAT (value-added tax) refund, 223
Vestibule of Warriors, 130
Views, best, 8–9
Viktor Levi Şarap Evi, 235
Visas, 37
Visitor information, 256–257
Vodina Caddesi, 207
Voice over Internet protocol (VoIP), 54
Voyvoda Caddesi, 196

Walking tours, self-guided, 191–208
Galata, 191–196
from the land walls to Balat and Fener, 201–208
underground Istanbul, 197–201

Water, drinking, 257
Water Distribution (Taksim Maksemi), 182
Weather, 33
Websites, best, 10
Whirling Dervishes, Sufi Music Concert & Sema Ceremony (ceremony of the Whirling Dervishes), 179, 231
Wi-Fi access, 54
Women travelers, 51
World War I, 19–20
World War II, 20

Yedikule (Seven Towers Fortress), 60, 166–167
Yeni Marmara, 233
Yeni Valide Camii or Yeni Camii (The New Queen Mother's Mosque), 158–159
The Yeraltı Camii (Underground Mosque), 181, 201
Yerebatan Sarnıçı (Yerebatan Cistern), 152, 197
Yeşil Camii (Green Mosque; Bursa), 242
Yeşil Camii (Nicaea), 248
Yeşil Türbesi (Green Tomb; Bursa), 242–243
Yıldırım Beyazıt Mosque (Yıldırım Beyazıt Camii; Bursa), 245
Yıldızlar Caféteria (Büyükada), 251
Yıldız Palace and Park (Yıldız Sarayı ve Parkı), 163–164
Yogurt, 187
Young Turks, 19
Youth & Sports Day, 34
Yüksek Kaldırım, 192

Zaer-iş, 217
Zafer Bayramı (Victory Day), 35
Zafer Plaza (Bursa), 240
Zarifi, 231–232
Zeyrek, 174
Zeyrek Camii (Church of the Pantocrator), 174
Zoë, Empress, 128, 130
Zulfaris Museum (Jewish Museum of Turkey), 148, 196

Accommodations

Airport Hotel, 93
A'jia, 92–93
Anemon Galata, 86
Ansen 130, 85
Apricot Hotel, 75
Arena Hotel, 75
Aruna Hotel, 76
Avicenna, 72, 74
Aya Nikola Boutique Pension (Büyükada), 251
Ayasofya Konakları, 76
Büyükada Princess Hotel, 251
Celal Ağa Konağı, 79–80
Çelik Palas Hotel (Bursa), 245
Ceylan Inter-Continental, 81
Cihangir Hotel, 85
Çirağan Palace Hotel Kempinski Istanbul, 90–91
Deniz Konak, 76
Dersaadet Oteli, 76
Divan, 82
Eresin Crown Hotel, 74
Fehmi Bey, 77
Five Boutique Hotel, 90
Four Seasons Bosphorus, 91
Four Seasons Sultanahmet, 72
Galata Antique Hotel, 86
Grand Hyatt Istanbul, 82
Hotel Alp, 79
Hotel Armada, 77
Hotel Ayasofya, 77
Hotel Empress Zoe, 77–78
Hotel Erguvan, 78
Hotel Niles, 80
Kervansaray Termal Hotel (Bursa), 245–246
Lares Park, 84
Les Ottomans, 91
Lush Hotel, 84
The Marmara Istanbul, 82
The Marmara Pera, 86
Mavi Ev (Blue House), 74
Mega Residence, 89
Mısafır Suites, 82, 84
Naz Wooden House, 79
Orient Express Hotel, 80
Ottoman Imperial, 74
Park Hyatt, 88–89
The Peak Hotel, 87
Pera Palace Hotel, 85–86
Pera Rose, 87
Poem, 79
The Point, 84–85
Polka Country Hotel (Polonezköy), 252
Radisson Blu, 92
Richmond, 87
Ritz-Carlton Istanbul, 81–82
Safran Hotel (Bursa), 246
Santa Ottoman Hotel, 87
Sapphire, 80–81
Sarı Konak, 78
Sheraton Istanbul and Four Points by Sheraton, 94
Sirkeci Konak, 80
Sofa, 89
Splendid Palace Hotel (Büyükada), 251
Sude Konak, 81
Sultanahmet Palace Hotel, 74–75
Sultanhan Hotel, 75
Sultan's Inn, 79
Sumahan, 93
Swissôtel, 89–90
Villa Zurich, 85
W Istanbul, 91–92
World House Hostel, 88
Zeugma Hotel, 78

Restaurants

A'jia, 120
Anemon Galata Hotel, 194
Balıkçı Sabahattin, 102
Banyan Seaside, 119
Beymen Brasserie, 116–117
Beyti, 107
Borsa, 117
Buhara 93, 104–105
Café du Levant, 118
Café Lokum, 103–104
Carne, 117
Cennet, 105
Cenova, 116
Çiçek Izgara (Bursa), 246–247
Çiya Sofrası, 120
Çok Çok, 113
Da Mario, 119
Darüzziyafe, 106
Del Mare, 120
Demeti, 112
Develi Restaurant, 108–109
Doğa Balık, 112–113
9 Ece Aksoy, 114
Fatih Belediyesi Sosyal Tesisleri, 105–106
Feriye Restaurant, 118
Fes Café, 106
Flamm, 114–115
Galata House, 116
Galata Konak, 194
Gedikli, 109–110

Gurme Boncuk, 113
Hacı Abdullah, 109
Hacı Baba Restaurant, 110
Hamdi Et Lokantası, 100
The Han, 104
House Café, 113–114
Hünkar, 117
Imperial Police Station, 103
Istanbul Culinary Institute, 110
Java Studio, 200
Kalamar Restaurant (Büyükada), 251
Kalecik Café Restaurant (Bursa), 247
Kantin, 117–118
Khorasanı Ocakbaşı, 104
Kivahan, 116
Köfteçi Arnavut, 107, 207
Kofteçi Hüseyin, 110
Konyalı Topkapı Sarayı Lokantası, 103
Köşebaşı Ocakbaşı, 117
Leb-i-Derya, 114
Leonardo Restaurant (Polonezköy), 252
Limonlu Bahçe, 115
Malta Köşkü, 119–120
Midpoint, 115
Mikla, 109
Milano Restaurant (Büyükada), 251
Orient Express Cafe, 100
Orkide Pastanesi, 205
Otantik, 115–116
Pandeli Lokantası, 100
Parantez Deli, 234
Parsifal, 112
Pierre Loti, 157
Poseidon, 118
The Pudding Shop, 105
Refik, 114
Saray Muhallebiçileri, 112
Sarnıç, 102–103
Seasons Restaurant, 103
Sekiz/Eight, 110
Sultanahmet Fish House, 104
Sultanahmet Köfteçısı, 105
Sultan Mehmet Café and Restaurant, 104
Tamara, 106
Topaz, 113
Tugra, 119
Uludağ Kebapçısı (Bursa), 247–248
Vogue, 119
Yakup 2, 115
Yeşil Ev, 103
Zencefil, 112
Zeyrekhane, 107
Zinhan, 100, 102
Ziya Şark Sofrası, 106

NOTES

MUSEUM	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Admission (TL)
Ayasofya	Closed	9am–4:30pm	9am–4:30pm	9am–4:30pm	9am–4:30pm	9am–4:30pm	9am–4:30pm	10; additional 10 for upper gallery
Beylerbeyi Palace	9am–4pm	9am–4pm	9am–4pm	9am–4pm	9am–4pm	9am–4pm	9am–4pm	5
Binbirdirek Sarnıcı	9am–9pm	9am–9pm	9am–9pm	9am–9pm	9am–9pm	9am–9pm	9am–9pm	5
Dolmabahçe Palace	Closed	9am–4pm	9am–4pm	Closed	9am–4pm	9am–4pm	9am–4pm	10 for Sultan's quarters; 8 for Harem
Galata Tower Elevator	8:30am–8pm	8:30am–8pm	8:30am–8pm	8:30am–8pm	8:30am–8pm	8:30am–8pm	8:30am–8pm	8
Istanbul Archaeology Museum	Closed	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	5
Istanbul Museum of Modern Art	Closed	10am–6pm	10am–6pm	10am–8pm	10am–6pm	10am–6pm	10am–6pm	7; free Thursday
Jewish Museum of Turkey	10am–4pm	10am–4pm	10am–4pm	10am–4pm	10am–2pm	10am–2pm	10am–2pm	By donation
Military Museum (Mehter Band 3 & 3:30)	Closed	Closed	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	1.50
Mosaic Museum	Closed	9am–6:30pm	9am–6:30pm	9am–6:30pm	9am–6:30pm	9am–6:30pm	9am–6:30pm	5
Museum of the Ancient Orient	Closed	9am–1pm	9am–1pm	9am–1pm	9am–1pm	9am–1pm	9am–1pm	Admission w/Archaeology Museum
Museum of Calligraphy	Closed	8:30am–noon; 1–4:30pm	8:30am–noon; 1–4:30pm	8:30am–noon; 1–4:30pm	8:30am–noon; 1–4:30pm	8:30am–noon; 1–4:30pm	Closed	3
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts	Closed	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	5
Naval Museum	Closed	Closed	9am–12:30pm; 1:30–5pm	9am–12:30pm; 1:30–5pm	9am–12:30pm; 1:30–5pm	9am–12:30pm; 1:30–5pm	9am–12:30pm; 1:30–5pm	3
Pera Museum	Closed	10am–7pm	10am–7pm	10am–7pm	10am–7pm	10am–7pm	Noon–6pm	7
Rahmi M. Koç Museum	Closed	10am–5pm	10am–5pm	10am–5pm	10am–5pm	10am–7pm	10am–7pm	8; additional 4.50 for submarine
Rumeli Fortress	Closed	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	4
Sabancı Museum	Closed	10am–6pm	10am–6pm	10am–6pm	10am–6pm	11am–5pm	11am–5pm	10
Sadberk Hanım Museum	10am–5pm	10am–5pm	Closed	10am–5pm	10am–5pm	10am–5pm	10am–5pm	6
St. Savior in Chora	9:30am–6:30pm	9:30am–6:30pm	Closed	9:30am–6:30pm	9:30am–6:30pm	9:30am–6:30pm	9:30am–6:30pm	10
Topkapı Palace	9am–5pm	Closed	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	9am–5pm	10; additional 10 for harem; additional 10 for treasury
Vakıflar Halı Müzesi	Closed	9am–noon; 1–4pm	9am–noon; 1–4pm	9am–noon; 1–4pm	9am–noon; 1–4pm	9am–noon; 1–4pm	Closed	Free
Yerebatan Cistern	9am–5:30pm	9am–5:30pm	9am–5:30pm	9am–5:30pm	9am–5:30pm	9am–5:30pm	9am–5:30pm	10
Yıldız Palace	Closed	10am–5pm	10am–5pm	10am–5pm	10am–5pm	10am–5pm	10am–5pm	4

You can find charming souvenirs and other Turkish treasures in Istanbul's Grand Bazaar. See chapter 7.

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